

Some Christ the King students to lose busing in September

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Special to The IFP

Scores of students who previously enjoyed bus service to Christ the King (CtK) Catholic Secondary School in Georgetown will have to start walking come the next school year.

Trustees of the Halton Catholic District School Board voted to strike down temporary bus service in the Stewart's Mill area during a board meeting Tuesday.

During the same meeting it was also decided that temporary bus service in the area of Ruddell Crescent and Moore Park Crescent would also be terminated as of September.

The locations lie within a 3.2km radius of the high school where bus service is not provided unless some kind of walking hazard is discovered.

After a Feb. 20, meeting it was announced that because the construction, which had made the Stewart's Mill area a walking hazard, had been completed the area was again subject to regular board policy.

This was not well received by local parents, who formally appealed to trustees not to remove the bus service during a March 20 presentation. Their arguments to keep the bus service were various including a fear of a possible traffic congestion increase as more parents drive their kids to school.

The very safety and health of students, who will now have to walk to school throughout the winter months was also brought up as were parent concerns for students, who cut through local parks to get to school.

"It is secluded, it is parkland. That's never been addressed and that is a huge safety issue for young girls," said Laura Kotsifas, who attended Tuesday's meeting. "You wouldn't let your child walk

through a national park alone."

The delegation even presented the board with a petition containing the names of 239 people opposed to the school bus cancellations but in the end this proved insufficient.

With 30 concerned parents in the audience, the trustees voted 5-4 to keep the bus service in place. However, a 75 per cent majority vote was required because it involved a policy exception.

North Halton student trustee Heather MacKinnon also challenged claims that the walk from the Stewart's Mill area to Christ the King Catholic Secondary School was filled with dangers.

"I live there and there's no safety hazards for walking students," she said.

In a shocking about-face, Oakville trustee Ed Viana, who had been one of the most vocal advocates of the continued bus service during the March 20 meeting, voted against the motion.

"I have driven my car there and there have been changes. The sidewalks, a couple of years ago, were a problem and that problem has been fixed now," he said.

The \$20,000 cost of keeping the bus service to the Stewart's Mill area going for another year was another reason why some staff and trustees opposed the motion.

Parents, who had petitioned the board to keep the bus service, questioned the trustees' judgment.

"It's really great to hear that my tax money can pay a million dollars so teachers can learn how to tie in religious and theological beliefs to science and geography, but they can't spend \$20,000 a year on our children's safety," said Nicole Kase, referring to the OECTA/OCSTA Religious Education Program in Halton which has cost \$936,000 to implement.

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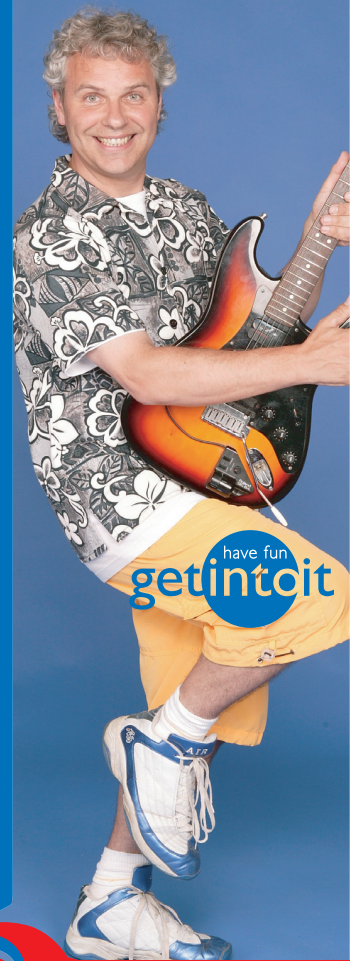
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