



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

March 22, 2024

Tom Shypitka, MLA
Kootenay East
302, 535 Victoria Avenue N.
Cranbrook, BC V1C 6S3

Dear Mr. Shypitka:

RE: TRANSPORTATION OF INDEPENDENT AND PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS

In response to your letter dated February 27, 2024, with respect to the transportation of children attending independent and private schools, the Board of Education of School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay), (the “Board”), has discussed and consulted with District staff regarding your concerns.

Transportation resources are currently being maximized to provide service to students of the public school system. School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) (the “District”) currently has total student ridership registrations that exceed available capacity on the Cranbrook school buses. Therefore, the District does not have additional capacity for students not attending District schools.

[Policy 20 - Transportation of Students](#), clearly states that “Transportation services will be available for those students enrolled in the District.” The Board considers Policy 20 as a commitment to provide transportation to students enrolled in the District as the safest means of transportation for students. The District’s [Administrative Procedure 560 – Transportation of Students](#), *Section 7*, clearly defines courtesy riders. Courtesy riders are only considered to be students enrolled in District schools.

The Board will continue to focus its efforts on transporting public school students in kindergarten to grade 12 under this mandate and budgetary restrictions. The Board would like to note that transportation of students in British Columbia is not a legislated requirement of school districts. Some school districts in the province have chosen not to provide student transportation, whereas the Board has committed to the safe transportation of District students at significant cost.

Independent schools are administered under the *Independent School Act* by an authority as defined under this Act and requires that independent school students be classified to these specific independent schools. The *Independent School Act*, in the definition of an independent school, clearly states that they “do not include a public school...”

Doug McPhee (Chair) • Trina Ayling • Bev Bellina • Irene Bischler
• Alysha Clarke • Nicole Heckendorf • Chris Johns • Sarah Madsen • Wendy Turner

Additionally, independent schools receive funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, in addition to the fees they charge families. These fees are available for independent schools to support alternative student transportation initiatives.

To summarize, the Board does not support the transportation of students enrolled in programs outside of the District as the Board is not responsible or beholden to the safety or educational success of these students. The District is only responsible for the educational success and safety of students registered with School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay). The District prides itself on providing an inclusive, accessible, and equitable educational experience for all District students.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)



Nick Taylor, CPA
Secretary Treasurer

CC: School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) Board of Education Trustees
Viveka Johnson, Superintendent
Rob Morrison, Member of Parliament
Leah Poirier, Parent
Vanessa Fer, Principal St. Mary's Catholic Independent School
Kim Jacobs, Administrative Assistant (Catholic Independent Schools of the Nelson Diocese)
Pamela Guilbault, Superintendent (Catholic Independent Schools of the Nelson Diocese)
Doug Steele, Kootenay Christian Academy
Cranbrook Christian School Society (Board Chair)