



BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 61 (GREATER VICTORIA)
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December 13, 2016

Susan Brice, Chair
Victoria Regional Transit Commission
520 Gorge Road East
Victoria, BC
V8T 2W6

Dear Chair Brice:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Education of School District 61 (Greater Victoria) to formally request the reinstatement of the Youth Pass program for students within the Greater Victoria region.

I am aware that BC Transit has put two options forward to the Commission for consideration at the meeting today. Unfortunately, neither version is realistic for our students or for our School District.

The elimination of the Youth Pass has had a profound negative impact on our most vulnerable students and their families which could limit their mobility and ability to access public education. We, as a public school district, are interested in promoting healthy and environmentally sustainable transportation options and have expressed our willingness to work with BC Transit to deal with the administrative issues associated with the reinstatement of the Youth Pass.

Our staff offered to facilitate a student card program to assist BC Transit's administration of this program as recently as November 25th; however, this is not even being considered by the Commission. The two options that are being presented to the Commission will not work for our students.

The "universal pass" is unrealistic for the public education system as we cannot charge fees nor would this be something we wish to pursue. With respect to the "bulk purchase", this would transfer the entire risk and responsibility for the administration of the pass, a Transit responsibility, to the Greater Victoria School District. It would also cost the District significant dollars that are intended for education.

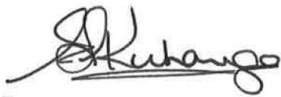
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The memo states that the Ministry of Education provided \$14.7 million for school districts to go towards reducing transportation costs for parents. This was primarily for school districts in rural and remote school districts. The Greater Victoria School District received \$20,000 for transportation that went directly to assist students with diverse learning needs.

The memo further claims that “BC Transit has been working with representatives from School District 61”; however, our options are not even being considered nor are they even referenced in the memo. Instead the memo suggests that the District is supporting the options being presented which we have clearly indicated are not realistic or viable for our students. Our staff have offered to work cooperatively with BC Transit in finding a solution to address the issue. However, we received the public agenda late yesterday and were notified that the Commission would be considering two options. This provided our Board of Education with minimal time to react.

In closing, we strongly request that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission reconsider the options being presented and seriously consider reinstating the Youth Pass Program. Our Greater Victoria students and families have expressed very strong views to you and to us that that an increase of over 28% in the cost of a transit pass will not work for them. We look forward to a favourable response to our request on behalf of all of our 19,000 students and their families in the Greater Victoria School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edith Loring-Kuhanga". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Edith Loring-Kuhanga
Board Chair

cc Board of Education