

Compiled responses to School Council Engagement Task Force First Ask 2017-18

Request for Input on Bill 1

Response rate: 23% of participating school councils overall

Percentages in compilation are based upon received responses.

1. Has your school council taken the opportunity to consider and review the difference that Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees has made in your school community?

Yes – 80%

No – 20 %

Comments:

- This year, the user fees were discontinued and the schools were subsidized for that money. Parents are concerned about what will happen next year. Will the schools continue to be funded? School council also discussed user pay lunch fees and how that will be administered in the years to come.
- It reduced the transportation costs for some children.
- We as a parent council have a unanimous vote that Bill 1 has taken away the teachers authority to say what happens with the field trips for the class. The administrative time and approval process takes precious resources and time away from where they are needed most, which is costing the students in education and parents in more opportunities. This limits the opportunities to educate and experience for our children.

2. Is your school council or school council representative at your Council of School Councils having conversations with the district about any shifts created as a result of Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees?

Yes – 60%

No – 40 %

Comments:

- Some schools are renaming school fees something else and the perception is some costs have increased for parents as a result.
- Our COSCs is extensively involved with the ASCA, School Trustees and Districts to help vocalize where the Parents stand on the issue of Bill 1.
- Especially busing, it leaves our District with a huge deficit.

3. Has Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees resulted in a heightened awareness of the complexity of school fees?

Yes – 80%

No – 20 %

Comments:

- Not at the parent level
- Parents are more aware of what school fees are and what they pay for now.
- Bill 1 hasn't raised awareness of complexity of school fees, it has only raised serious questions regarding the complexity of government policies you are putting in place. At the elementary levels you should let the families work with the schools and parents councils if there is a need for financial support. Our school has had 2% of families apply for financial assistance with school fees &/or school supplies and we have had an abundance of support within our school family to help. Bill 1 is taking spontaneous field trip opportunities away from 100% of our children so that we get 20% of our School bill reduced. We feel this is too much risk.
- Yes, it has let parents know what the district covers and sponsors versus what Alberta Ed thinks if acceptable.

4. Does your school council discuss transportation with respect to successfully getting students to school?

Yes – 80%

No – 20 %

Comments:

- We have concerns how the 2.4 km distance is calculated. Currently, it uses back lanes and walking across open fields instead of lighted sidewalks. We feel this should be reviewed as not all parents are open to having their children walk in these areas in the dark – as it often is in winter. We also are concerned about how rec academy will be impacted with changes to school busing. As well, the cost associated with busing will not be decreasing – only likely to go up with the carbon tax – how does the district deal with the shortfall in funding if they are not allowed to charge more for the service?
- We feel there should be a sliding scale for transportation based on a child's ability and age to walk to school with a certain distance. For example, the expectation that a child attending kindergarten or grade 1 can walk to school up to 2.4 kms is too much. We also feel that if a child is attending a program that they have been identified as needing, transportation should be provided regardless of the distance to that school. An example would be early learning programs or special education programs like strategies or opportunities program.
- Our school, is not rural. We are urban with a designated area of approximately 2.7 sq. km. With only 13% of our students using a school bus the majority of our parents are very active in getting our kids to and from school. Of the 13% using the school bus transportation, most would include our Before and After School Program within the school and our Logos/Place/Steps kids who take advantage of an exceptional program which may not be in their designated area and have to bus.
- This is a huge issue for our city. It means often small children have to walk very far in very cold temperatures to get to school as well as cross main thoroughfares. The Board does not feel this is safe so they subsidize kids from 1.6 kms. This seems so much more reasonable to parents.

5. Are the start and dismissal times at your school based on the availability of some modes of student transportation?

Yes – 80%

No – 20 %

Comments:

- Yes, absolutely
- We work with all of the schools which use the transfer buses however we are all relative to others in the area.
- Elementary, junior high and high school all start at different times because our busses do a triple run to save on costs.

6. Transportation is complex in Alberta because of geographical, municipal and cost circumstances as well as the opportunities for school choice. Given these complexities who should be part of the discussions around reasonable expectations regarding school transportation?

- We feel that parents, school administrators, employees from school transportation and municipal government should be included in these talks.
- Parents of rural communities should be involved in the discussions.
- Parents need to be better informed what is considered a school of choice and how much that school of choice will cost them before they put their child in that program. The costs need to be upfront, not hidden in incentives at the beginning.
- School Trustees, School Administration, City Planners – someone who knows the geographical area, Director of Transportation, Parents and local school groups
- Parents, students, principals and school boards and school board trustees