

January 10th, 2025

Warden Penny Smith
414 Woodlawn Drive
PO Box 280 Shelburne, NS
B0T 1W0

Subject: Response – Bussing Shortage

Dear Warden Smith,

Thank you for your letter dated December 18th regarding your concerns around the ongoing bus shortages affecting your school district. I can appreciate the inconvenience for families when a bus route is cancelled due to driver illness/shortage. As a region, it's not something we take lightly and continue to focus on finding solutions to the issue. With 2 daughters actively in the system, I know firsthand the importance of reliable and safe transportation to and from school.

Recruitment

We have taken several steps including a full-day Job Fair at Shelburne NSCC on May 31st, 2024. During the week of September 24th, 2024, we displayed a school bus with a “*We’re Hiring*” banner on Highway 103 across from Tim Horton’s in Shelburne. These are in addition to ongoing job ads across the country, as well as job postings on our regional and provincial websites. We have advertised an open position for Substitute Driving positions across all 3 counties due to driver shortages. Over a 2-year period, we’ve collected the following for your consideration:

	Yarmouth County	Shelburne County	Digby County
Interview Applicants	45	16	20
Did Not Attend	9	9	7
Incomplete Training	12	3	8
Applicants Hired	20	4	5

Bus Cancellations

As it relates to your concern around frequent cancellations of bus runs in your community, I offer the information below for your consideration. While a cancelled bus route in any community at any time is of concern, I’m proud of the steps our region has undertaken to mitigate these instances. As outlined below, I’d counter that our region is cancelling bus routes

far less than others across the province and has made significant efforts to minimize impact on our families as much as possible. Table C alone demonstrates our staff's commitment to doing all they can to avoid such cancellations.

NOTE: All the following data represents a timeline of January 2023 through December 2024

Table A: Outlines an overview of total route cancellations by county.

Route Cancellations		
Yarmouth County	Shelburne County	Digby County
4 full days – 0 half days	5 full days – 2 half days	0 full days – 0 half days

Table B: Outlines an overview of total double runs to avoid cancellation by county.

Double Runs – Another Route Transports Vacant Route		
Yarmouth County	Shelburne County	Digby County
20 full days – 10 half days	11 full days – 17 half days	3 full days – 4 half days

Table C: Outlines an overview of drivers assigned out of county to avoid cancellation.

Driver Assigned Out of County to Avoid Cancellation		
Yarmouth → Shelburne	Digby → Yarmouth	Yarmouth → Digby
73 full days – 62 half days	7 full days – 10 half days	8 full days – 11 half days

Table D: Outlines a region-by-region comparison of route cancellations.

Region to Region Comparison – Route Cancellations		
Tri-County Region	Neighboring Region	Neighboring Region
10	396	47

Fleet Maintenance – Safety Regime

- Every Bus is pre-tripped checking over 30 components/operation before assignment
- Preventative Maintenance (PM1 & PM2) schedules are every 3000 kms and 12,500 kms- buses are checked, components adjusted/fluids changed.

- Brake inspections/measurements every six months
- Motor Carrier Inspections – every six months
- Diagnostic updates every 60 days
- Body repair/paint refresh for fleet on going
- Comprehensive rust proofing program

Revising Schedules, etc.

Bus runs and routes undergo major reviews annually over the summer months and these are conducted thoroughly by our Transportation Department. When efficiencies are possible, routes are blended as per Provincial Policy Guidelines. Any run or route changes are pushed out to parents directly with minimum of one week's notice (also website/ social media) and late bus routes are advertised when time exceeds 15 minutes (social media/ website etc.).

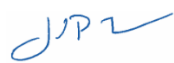
Municipal Funding

The monthly contributions made to the Regional Centres from Towns and Municipalities are referred to in the Education Act. The Mandatory Education Tax Rate is calculated as per provincial regulations at 0.3048 per \$100 of uniform assessment. These amounts are included in general funding for Regional Centres received from EECD and are not considered restricted funding; this is general funding with no stipulations. This funding along with the other funding received from EECD is used to operate the Regional Centre in providing an education to the students of the Tri-Counties. These funds are considered a flow-through and with all due respect, to reference this funding in relation to bus service is misleading.

Conclusion

With the above said, our primary goal is to never cancel a bus run or have any late buses. However, that isn't our currently reality and we're more than willing to meet and collaborate around efforts to recruit more drivers in Shelburne County and address existing gaps. I'd be remiss not stating that our transportation department is a group of people who take a great deal of pride in their roles and face constant scrutiny, which is often misguided and lacking the full scope of facts. I trust the above provides you with some data that reflects their efforts. As a region, we remain committed to resolving the gaps and would value any input or collaboration.

Sincerely,



Jared Purdy
Regional Executive Director
Tri-County Regional Centre for Education