

NEWS RELEASE

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More bussing not the solution to student safety

Halifax – In response to the Province’s Walking Distance Review, the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) cautions against increasing the number of students bussed to school in Nova Scotia. A consultant report, released by the Department of Education, recommends reducing the distance beyond which students are bussed to school, thereby increasing the need for bussing overall.

The EAC argues the best solutions are in making our streets safer for students who walk or bicycle to school and in keeping and building small, community schools.

“I’d rather see more tax dollars poured into schools you can walk to safely than into the gas tanks of busses,” says Janet Barlow, Coordinator of the Active & Safe Routes to School program at the EAC.

The Department of Education contends that a reduction in walking distances is about keeping our students safe. Barlow argues that if our streets are not safe, the long-term solution is not a bus. The EAC recommends the Province and school boards work with municipalities to create active transportation policies and plans. This will make school walking routes safe, increase physical activity for our children and youth and promote environmentally sustainable transportation.

“Millions of dollars are spent on bussing for over 60% of our students across Nova Scotia,” Barlow says. “The Department of Education and school boards put no resources of any kind into ensuring walking routes to school are safe. Walking students must fend for themselves. This isn’t fair.”

Barlow also questions where and how we’re building our schools. She says in order to reduce bussing costs and our impact on climate change, we need to reverse the trend toward building “big box” schools. Such schools replace two or three smaller, community schools and mean more students on busses instead of using their own two feet to travel to school.

“I compliment the Department of Education for undertaking this review. It was needed to shed light on the safety risks many of our students face on the walk to school,” says Barlow.

Friday, March 21 is the deadline for public comment on the Walking Distance Review Report and Recommendations found at <http://www.ednet.ns.ca/events/walkingdistance>.

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