

From: RADU VULPE <vulpe_radu@yahoo.com>

Sent: September 14, 2020 10:29 AM

To: Ralph Forsyth

Subject: School Bus Cheakamus!

Hi Ralph,

Thank you for taking my phone call today!

As we spoke, below you'll find in detail the reason why we should have a school bus in Cheakamus:

I was advised by the Spring Creek Principal, Mr Stuart Bent, to contact Mr Ian Currie, director of operations for School District 48 and to express my concern to him. I called and I spoke with his secretary. She assured me that he will contact me soon. ***It never happened!***

Almost a week later I called again, this time I asked for Mr Paul Else, director of transportation. I spoke with his secretary - Ms. Christine Lindsay, who was very kind and explained to me the process to follow in order to address this issue. She sent and asked me to fill up the Courtesy Form and she assured me that as soon she receives the form, Mr Paul Else will contact me. ***It never happened!***

In the email that I sent with the form back to her I have included the following safety reasons why a school bus to Cheakamus is absolutely necessary:

1) The only way to walk/bike to school is using the Valley Trail (2.4km - about 30-40 min in the summer when is dry, or more, because it is not a flat terrain)

The Valley Trail from Cheakamus to Spring Creek is through the forest, far away from the houses or streets, there is no quick access for help if the kids need it, under the level 5 High Voltage Power Line. Any time you can encounter wild life - especially bears, coyotes, possible cougars.

Because of the specific climate in Whistler, the weather is very unfriendly during the winter: usually it starts raining hard at the end of October and after, it is snowing/ raining really hard for the rest of the winter with a few sunny days, walking/ biking for most of the time is impossible.

It is almost impossible to understand why the school and the district are recommending walking and biking when everyone in Whistler knows that you can't bike in the winter and walking/driving the kids as a parent is possible only if the parent is not going to work or his job schedule is very flexible which doesn't apply for many people in Cheakamus.

The kids walking every morning through the middle of the forest, in a place well known for bear encounters, in the dark, under the high voltage power line, when the snow is many times more than 1m deep, many times in heavy rain, when the temperature is between +5 and -15 degree Celsius is definitely out of discussion!

2) *It is no way to use the local public transit buses because there is no bus station or bus from Spring Creek to Cheakamus!*

Other areas like Creekside or Bayshores, also part of Courtesy Ridership, have access to public transit to/from Spring Creek, but Cheakamus doesn't!

We can use the public buses on the way to school, but not on the way back, it is not a bus station from Spring Creek to Cheakamus!

On the way to school the bus station is on the Highway, the question is how safe it is when a public bus full of kids (we have probably close to 50 kids attending the Spring Creek school from Cheakamus) stops at a station located on the Highway and all the kids are running to school??? And to add to that, possible 1/2m or more of snow over night, which in Whistler it happens quite often.

How about the Covid safety regulation? How high is the risk of spreading the virus when more than 30 kids are taking the public bus every day? As I know in the public bus are not allowed more than 20 people at this moment!!!

3) *Driving the kids every day to/from school is not a viable option!*

Most of the houses in Cheakamus are WHA houses, most of us are families with relatively medium to low income, so we can not afford not to go to work every day or to pay someone else to drive the kids to school! So, there is no one to drive the kids to and from school!!

Most of us are working for the mountain or in the tourism services. In the winter especially, we start working earlier than in the summer so we can't drop off the kids outside the school earlier in the cold and rain, plus the fact that according with the new school COVID-19 safety regulations we are not allowed to drop off the kids at any time we need!

This option is against the Covid safety! More than 50 cars driving, parking, dropping off kids (most of the time the parents are not staying in the car), kids walking all over in order to go to their designated entrance is definitely less safe than having a bus that stops at a specific location and the kids are going on specific routes, organized to their classes.

3) My son is 10 years old! If he doesn't go to school when me and my wife are at work that means he has to stay home alone until we're back, every day, which is illegal! Not going to work is not an option for us, we don't have other sources of income other than work, as many other Cheakamus parents. This situation applies to many families in Cheakamus!!

Thank you again for your support!

Best wishes,
Radu Vulpe