

February 3, 2022

Honourable Caroline Mulroney
Minister of Transportation
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8
caroline.mulroney@pc.ola.org

Re: Provincial funding to municipalities to widen dead-end roads in Durham Region for the safe operation of school buses

Dear Minister Mulroney,

We are writing to you on behalf of Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) as the Durham District School Board (DDSB) and Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) representatives to request that provincial infrastructure funding be provided to municipalities to ensure they can appropriately construct areas for school bus vehicles to safely turn around on dead-end roads. Many dead-end roads, particularly in rural areas of the municipalities of Durham Region, do not currently have the appropriate conditions and turning radius for school bus vehicles to turn around safely.

As you are no doubt aware, student transportation is complex, requiring careful attention to safety considerations, routing, vehicle size and student needs. It has been suggested that spotters be available on bus routes to facilitate safe turnarounds of school bus vehicles on dead-end roads, and that buses should make three-point turns utilizing private driveways. The significant shortage of school bus drivers, the cost prohibitive nature of adding a second driver on each bus route, the liability of using private property, and the increased risk of potential accident when attempting to turn around on existing dead-end roads where there is no certainty that private driveways will be maintained to an appropriate standard, mean this solution is simply not feasible. Unfortunately, there have been times in the past when buses have been stuck in ditches and on shoulders. Alternatively, the use of smaller school bus vehicles on routes where dead-end roads are present has been considered, but in many cases, the roads are still not wide enough to facilitate safe turnaround and the driver shortage and cost increase of running additional buses on single routes confirm this solution is also not feasible.

In seeking ways to mitigate additional stress to school bus drivers who are already managing the significant responsibility of transporting students, we have worked with municipalities through their Public Works and Transportation departments to explore and determine feasibility of all available solutions. Unfortunately, municipalities have not been willing to make upgrades to their roadways and this issue has been a cause for many conflicts between DSTS and municipalities over the past few years.

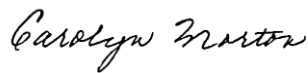
We do understand that municipalities may not have sufficient funding from the property tax base to do this and are unlikely to increase taxes to fund such an endeavour. Ultimately, dead-end roads need to be widened to accommodate an appropriate turning radius for school buses. Alternatively, student transportation providers are left with no choice but to find safe places for school buses to stop to pick-up passengers. As municipalities are responsible for the provision and maintenance of roadways that are safe for bus and all other vehicle travel, funding to complete these projects is essential and that is why

we are reaching out directly to you to seek your support in providing funding for these types of turnarounds.

In addition to seeking infrastructure funding, we are also advocating for proactive change. Going forward all municipalities should be required to construct subdivisions and roads where the design of any dead-end roads includes a wide enough radius for school bus vehicles to safely turn around.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Morton
Chairperson
Durham District School Board



Morgan Ste. Marie
Chairperson
Durham Catholic District School Board

Cc:

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Hon. Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance

Hon. Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education

M.P.P Lindsey Park, Durham

M.P.P Laurie Scott, Haliburton – Kawartha Lakes – Brock

Trustees, Durham District School Board

Trustees, Durham Catholic District School Board

Durham Regional Council

Municipal Councils, Cities of Pickering and Oshawa, Towns of Ajax and Whitby, Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge