



Evergreen School Division

Box 1200 • Gimli, Manitoba • R0C 1B0 • Ph. (204) 642-6260 • Fax (204) 642-7273 • www.esd.ca

February 8, 2022

Dear Parents / Caregivers:

As we approach the two-year mark since the start of this pandemic, challenges are multiplying. In some areas, where we have influence, we have been able to mitigate against negative impact with strategic planning and deployment of resources. In other areas, where circumstances are largely out of our control, we continue to face daily challenges.

Even before the pandemic, like rural school divisions all over the country, the Division struggled to recruit and retain drivers. We have frequently advertised for new drivers on a variety of platforms, followed up on potentially interested parties, led training sessions, collaborated with neighboring divisions and investigated alternative solutions. Expectations related to the pandemic reduced our already limited pool of regular and substitute drivers. We are working with Pupil Transportation Unit to assist with securing MPI testing spots to help alleviate our shortage; however, we do not have sufficient drivers to cover our routes.

In short, bus drivers require a particular skill set, interest and flexibility that is hard to find. We continually accept applications from interested candidates. Please contact transportation@esd.ca if you are interested in joining our team! Also, please join us in sharing your appreciation for our caring and dedicated bus drivers!

Additionally, supply chain issues and labour shortage are further impacting our transportation system. Just as the automotive industry is severely hampered with critical shortages of necessary parts, so too is the supply chain for bus parts. Despite all our significant efforts to locate necessary parts for some repairs, a number of our buses have been sidelined while we wait weeks or months for parts. Labour shortages have further delayed work as garages manage reduced and interrupted work due to illness. Our mechanics and transportation department have sourced parts from every conceivable location to keep buses repaired and safeties completed in order to maintain our fleet.

As though all of the foregoing wasn't enough challenge for the transportation department, the weather has been unusually challenging. It has been many years since we have had a winter such as this.

We know that transportation is critical to support student attendance at school, and that when bus transportation is not available, some families cannot make other arrangements. Absences related to bus transportation will be noted in your child's attendance record and teachers alerted. As always, when students are unable to come to school, teachers will support student learning with special consideration. Please contact your child's teacher if you have questions.

Our transportation department is working long hours under additional pressure to manage circumstances not within our control. We understand there is pandemic fatigue and a wish to get back to a time when there wasn't a variety of reasons why buses might be cancelled. Unfortunately, we are not there yet; however, we will continue to do the best we can under enormously challenging circumstances. We hope for your understanding and kindness a little longer while we lean into the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

Roza Gray, Superintendent

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