

January 23, 1997

**SUBJECT: BUS PAY PARKING IN STANLEY PARK AND QUEEN  
ELIZABETH PARK - BUSES AND VANS TO BE EXEMPTED  
FROM PARKING CHARGES**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT all buses and vans carrying groups of students from day care, elementary school, high school, and other equivalent educational institutions, for visits where the primary purpose is educational be exempted from pay parking in Stanley Park and Queen Elizabeth Park.**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to review the various educational and non-profit groups visiting Stanley Park and Queen Elizabeth Park in buses and vans and to recommend to the Board whether any of them should be exempted from paying the bus parking charges.

**BACKGROUND**

At its meeting held on January 13, 1997, the Board considered staff's Board Report dated December 20, 1996, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. This Board Report dealt with the subject of vehicles and groups to be charged bus parking rates and the fines for bus parking violations.

The Board approved the following motions:

1. THAT all tour buses and tour vans parking in Stanley Park or Queen Elizabeth Park, with the exception or any services specifically exempted by the Board, be included as vehicles which are required to pay the designated bus rates for parking.
2. THAT the Board exempt BC Transit buses, the horse and carriage service operated by AAA Horse and Carriage, The Vancouver Trolley Company shuttle service and all similar shuttle services, and the proposed Stanley Park jitney service, from payment of the bus parking charges.
3. THAT the Board approve a fine for bus parking violations in Stanley Park and Queen Elizabeth Park of \$100, to be payable for any bus or van parked without displaying the appropriate daily parking ticket or annual decal, commencing on January 1, 1997.
4. THAT staff be instructed to consider any and all exemptions to the above including buses conveying persons for educational purposes to Stanley

## Park and Queen Elizabeth Park"

### **DISCUSSION**

Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is a summary of the issues and information considered by staff in reviewing this matter, including identification of different types of non-profit user groups, reasons for their visits, and points of origin of the user groups. It also summarises the main school and charter bus companies' estimates of the proportion of their business which comes from school and other non-profit groups visiting Stanley Park and Queen Elizabeth Park.

The main points identified in this review are:

- there are many different non-profit groups which may have some claim for consideration for exemption from parking charges. 25 different types of groups were identified, including groups in the following categories: education, youth, community, adults, charitable and physically challenged.
- these groups visit the parks for different reasons, including educational (e.g. the Aquarium, nature walks), non-educational (e.g. picnics, sports, swimming pool), and combination (e.g. nature walk, followed by visit to the Water Park).
- the points of origin of these groups include the City of Vancouver, Greater Vancouver, elsewhere in B.C, Canada, and outside of Canada.
- while many of these groups coming in chartered vehicles use yellow school buses, some come in chartered tour buses or vans.

According to the Vancouver School Board, a few schools have their own buses but most of them charter yellow school buses. There are 4 bus companies which rent out yellow school buses. From discussions with these companies, it is apparent that by far their greatest usage is by school groups (as high as 99% in the case of the largest of these companies), with relatively few rentals to other non-profit groups. Very few of these school buses are hired by any other types of groups.

The 3 main charter bus companies which rent out coaches and vans to non-profit groups, including schools, all indicated that these rentals constitute a very small part of their business and that, in most cases, they are for long distance trips e.g. school ski trips to Whistler. Each of these companies estimated that less than 5 of their charters per month would be to schools or other non-profit groups visiting Stanley Park or Queen Elizabeth Park.

If buses carrying school groups were to be exempted from bus parking charges, the Board should also consider whether buses carrying other non-profit groups, either adult or youth, visiting the parks for educational purposes, should also be exempted.

There are many different types of non-profit groups which use the parks and

could make a claim for exemption from parking charges. A few examples would include groups from the Scouts or Guides, youth sports teams, Big Brothers / Big Sisters, Variety Club, universities, seniors centres, community centres, neighbourhood houses, private ESL schools and adult education.

Some of these groups would include mixed age groups, others only youths or only adults. As with schools, visits by these groups could be for educational, non educational or combination reasons. If some of these groups were to be exempted and not others, concerns could arise as to equity in treatment.

To enable any system of exemptions to be manageable, and to avoid claims of unfair treatment of some groups, staff's recommendation is that exemptions be limited only to school groups which are visiting the parks primarily for educational purposes and that none of these other non-profit groups be exempted.

This policy should ensure that the majority of educational outings to the parks are not subject to the bus parking charge.

If these school group outings are combining educational and non-educational aspects, the educational component should be the main one in order for the exemption to apply. For example, under this policy, a school group having a short nature walk, followed by a picnic and games, would not qualify, whereas a morning's visit to the Aquarium, followed by a short stop at 3rd Beach would qualify. Enforcement of this aspect of the policy would have to rely on the honour system.

For the purpose of this exemption, "school groups" would include all day care, elementary school and high school students from public or private educational institutions. Because of the concept that youth education is the reason for having these exemptions, it is not proposed to restrict this exemption to Vancouver students, but to include all such groups, no matter where their origin. Only a small percentage of school groups visiting the parks are from outside the Lower Mainland.

A system which exempts school groups could be administered by allowing a blanket exemption for all chartered yellow school buses (4 bus companies) plus any yellow buses owned by schools.

The yellow bus charter companies would be put on an honour system to pay the parking charge when they are transporting any groups which are not exempted. The Board would expect to lose minor amounts of revenue from abuse or misunderstanding of this policy.

Where a bus or van, other than a yellow school bus, is being used for an exempt group, the educational institution would apply in advance to the Board for a parking pass. This pass would be valid on the requested date only.

Any vehicles carrying groups which are not exempt from paying the parking charge, would receive at least one warning notice from U-Park, indicating that they should be paying for parking, before any violation notices are issued to them. This should ensure that no bus company would be ticketed because of

its ignorance or misunderstanding of the rules regarding exemptions.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

A system which only exempts buses carrying school groups would be manageable from an administrative and enforcement point of view and would be in keeping with the Board' s desire to encourage use of the parks for educational purposes. Losses through abuse of the honour system should be minor.

Exempting any other types of groups would be difficult to administer and could lead to claims of unfairness from other groups which are fairly similar in nature, but are not being allowed the exemption.

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## **Appendix 2**

### **Types of non profit groups using buses to visit Stanley Park and Queen Elizabeth Park**

#### Education groups

- schools - public
- schools - private
- day care
- summer educational programmes (adult and youth)
- ESL programmes (students 18 and under)
- University and college
- private ESL schools (adult and youth)
- Adult Education

#### Youth groups

- Scout and Guide
- Sports teams
- Youth clubs

#### Community Groups

- Community Centres
- Seniors
- Nursing Homes
- Hospitals
- Churches

## Neighbourhood Houses

- Adults
- Sports teams
- Club outings and picnics

## Charitable / Physically Challenged (adults & youth)

- CNIB
- Big Brothers / Sisters
- Children' s charities
- Variety Club
- Other
- HandyDart Vans

## Types of visits to be considered for each group

- Educational Aquarium, nature walks, Ecology Society programmes
- Non educational picnics, sports, water park, pool
- Combination e.g. nature walk, followed by visit to water park

## Types of buses used

- Yellow school buses - owned by school
- Yellow school buses - chartered from private operator
- Tour bus or van - chartered by school or other non profit group
- Tour bus or van owned by school or other non profit group.

We have no detailed information on the vehicles owned by schools and other nonprofit groups. The Vancouver School Board indicates that very few of the Vancouver schools have their own vehicles.

According to the Vancouver School Board, and to the bus companies we spoke to, the main companies chartering buses to schools are:

## Yellow school buses

- Cardinal Transportation
- Laidlaw
- GT Lynch
- Third Wave

## Cardinal

- approx.75 x 72-seater buses
- approx.75 x 14-seater buses

## Estimated usage

- 99% school groups - from Vancouver, Coquitlam, N & W Van.,Surrey
- 1% other

### Laidlaw

- 6 x 72-seater buses
- 2 x 44-seater buses

### Estimated usage

- 40% school groups
- 20% ESL groups (university age & adults)
- 20% other non profit groups
- 20% private groups / companies

### G T Lynch

- 25 x 72-seater buses

### Estimated usage

- 75% school groups
- 25% other - mainly seniors, very few private groups

### Third Wave

- 4 x 72-seater buses
- 4 x smaller buses

### Estimated usage

- 90% school groups
- 10% other groups - church, seniors, day care etc.

Third Wave is based in Delta, very few of these charters come into Stanley Park or QE.

### Regular Coaches and Vans

- Pacific Coach Lines
- Maverick
- Charter Bus Lines

All these companies said that very few coaches or vans are chartered to schools or other non profit groups visiting Stanley Park and QE - most highway coaches chartered by schools are for long distance trips (e.g. ski trips to Whistler).

### Pacific Coach Lines

6-10 buses for charter, all 47 seaters. Only 1-2% of charters are to non profit groups, including school groups.

### Maverick

Estimates has about 1 charter / month to schools visiting Stanley Park, 2-3 / month to seniors groups

### Charter Bus Lines

Largest charter operator, has over 100 buses, ranging from 11 to 56 seaters. Estimates only charters out about 1 bus / month to school groups, and 2 to 4 / month to other identifiable non profit groups, visiting Stanley Park and QE.