



## Media Release

**Immediate Release: November 7, 2019**

### **STEO Prepared for Inclement Weather**

**(Johnstown)** With winter fast approaching and the onset of inclement weather already upon us, Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO) has kicked-off the process to manage bus cancellations for the winter season.

“STEO continues to work to enhance communication with parents and students about decisions to cancel busing when adverse weather conditions or icy roads make it unsafe to run buses,” said Janet Murray, STEO’s General Manager and Chief Administrative Officer.

Letters have been sent to all parents of students in both the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) and the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB), explaining the process for issuing bus cancellations.

Announcements regarding the cancellation of school bus and special vehicle transportation are broadcast by local media outlets, starting at 6:15 a.m. at the latest. Alternatively, parents/guardians and students can verify if buses are cancelled via a variety of STEO resources, including their website at [www.steo.ca](http://www.steo.ca), their free Bus Planner App, Parent Portal, Facebook and Twitter feeds and their inclement weather hotline.

As inclement weather arrives, parents are reminded to have a transportation contingency plan in place in the event that school vehicle transportation is cancelled, as schools typically do remain open to receive students, even when buses are not running. Conversely, if buses are operating and parents feel that conditions are not conducive to travel, it is to their discretion to keep their children home.

“The decision to cancel busing is not taken lightly,” explains Ms. Murray. “It is based on careful analysis of several factors, from up-to-date weather forecasts, to information provided by bus company weather captains, who physically check the roads on mornings when problematic weather or road conditions are forecast.”

During the months of November through March each year, STEO receives up-to-date information regarding regional weather and road conditions from MeteoGroup – a global weather advisor and one of the world’s leading providers of full-service weather solutions. STEO receives several

daily notifications from the MeteoGroup and is in direct contact with their Meteorologists when inclement weather is forecast.

Inclement weather forecasts and radar updates are reviewed by the STEO weather team at 9:00 p.m. the night before and again at 4:00 a.m. on the day in question, at which time STEO is advised of all current or impending inclement weather conditions forecast for the vast area of service.

When inclement weather is forecast for the morning hours, weather captains from STEO's contracted bus companies, with support from their staff members and local road crews, physically check on road conditions as early as 4:00 a.m. The 18 weather captains from across the region report their observations and recommendations to the STEO weather team, who in turn consult with the school boards to come to a decision regarding transportation for the day. This decision must be made no later than 5:45 a.m. to ensure timely communication of messaging to families.

A challenge that STEO and the boards encounter from time to time, occurs when inclement weather, such as freezing rain, is forecast to move into the region during the late morning or afternoon hours and a decision must be made with the safety of the afternoon commute in mind. The forecasted timing of these weather events is not always precise; however, the decision still must be made by 5:45 a.m. at the latest. There are inevitably situations when transportation is cancelled, only to find that the weather system is delayed or diverted. More often though, the system has moved through the area as forecast, or earlier, which can affect the safe delivery of students home in the afternoon.

"We understand that cancelling buses in bad weather can have a big impact on families and we know that students are best served in the classroom," says Murray. "Parents must understand though that we sincerely care about our students and that their safety is our top priority. There are times that we simply must cancel busing, with the safety of the entire student body – and our bus drivers – top of mind."

The process by which inclement weather decisions are made is undertaken with care and from an informed position, recognizing that sometimes STEO and the boards are working with information and forecasts which may shift or change.

STEO's mission during inclement weather season and throughout the year, is to provide efficient and reliable transportation to all our families, without compromising the safety of our student passengers.

For more information, please contact:

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