

NDP Caucus News

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Dinn Says Government's School Busing Decisions Are Failing Students, Parents, and School Staff

NL NDP Leader Jim Dinn (St. John's Centre) is calling out the provincial government and the Minister of Education for proposing earlier school start and dismissal times, arguing the move is a direct consequence of the government's decision to cut costs on student transportation. Dinn says schools, parents, and caregivers are now being forced to shoulder the burden of a rushed policy change after government eliminated the 1.6-kilometre busing rule.

Dinn is calling the government's survey proposing changing school times a knee-jerk reaction to a problem of its own making. An ATIPP request revealed that eliminating the 1.6-kilometre rule added approximately \$9.8 million annually to busing costs. In 2023, he warned that the decision could eventually lead to disruptions and safety concerns for students, families, and school communities due to a lack of available buses. He says government is now scrambling to deal with the consequences of a decision it failed to properly plan for.

"The fact is that neither the former Liberal government nor the Conservatives, who pushed heavily for the removal of the 1.6-kilometre rule, did their homework on the added costs and the long-term impacts on school transportation," said Dinn. "It was another decision made without proper consultation. Now, parents, teachers, and school staff are the ones left trying to figure out a way forward. Imagine how much we could do to address class size and composition with \$9.8 million?"

"Back when this was decided, [I spoke to CBC](#) and questioned whether there would be enough buses once the plan was fully implemented, or whether that burden would fall to schools themselves. Now this move by government to cut costs shows that what I had hoped wouldn't happen, has happened," said Dinn. "Both myself and my colleague Sheilagh O'Leary have received a number of calls from parents in our districts who are upset with this decision, highlighting that it will impact family schedules and force changes to childcare plans, which are already scarce to secure in this province."

"The abysmal track record of consultation from both the former Liberal government and the current Conservatives does not make me hopeful about the outcome. The bottom line is that we cannot make cuts while maintaining services – this will fall on the backs of parents, students and educators."

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