

Transit drivers skip school route after snowball assault

December 8, 2006

One week ago, on the 1st of December, OC Transpo temporarily cut off service to Louis Riel high school last Friday afternoon when a bus driver reported that youths mocked his accent, pelted him with slush balls and broke the front panel on the door of his bus while it was stopped in front of the school.

Bus driver Ravinder Singh Jande called OC Transpo for help during the incident, which made his bus unfit to take passengers. A supervisor decided to cancel the remaining three buses on the route that were scheduled to serve the school that day.

School board spokeswoman Lucie Boileau said OC Transpo overreacted to the incident, which took place the same day a violent winter storm cut off power to thousands of homes in eastern Ontario and suspended school bus service in Ottawa. "A hundred and seventy-five students were left standing in the rain and the snow ... because of one incident that involved maybe one or two students," Boileau said. "We don't think that it was acceptable."

OC Transpo spokeswoman Helen Gault defended the decision to cut off service. "Obviously we have to be concerned about the safety of our operators," said Gault, OC Transpo's acting director of transit services. "We really want to provide a good service, but customers have an obligation also to show respect and restraint."