

THE OKANAGAN SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2008

TRANSPORTATION

Bus service disappoints

I am a student at UBC Okanagan and every morning I ride the bus with my son to his daycare, drop him off, and then take the bus up to the university.

On a good day, the ride takes me about an hour, and along the way I read a book or mark papers, as I am a teaching assistant for first-year English classes.

I have always found riding the bus to be an enriching experience, which allows me to talk with other commuters and to build community bonds.

However, this week my commute has taken me over three hours to get my son to his daycare and then get to my job. In -20C weather, it is extremely frustrating to stand out in the cold with my young child while bus after bus passes us going the opposite direction.

Wednesday was the worst experience I have ever had as I and a group of other parents with young children stood outside for more than 45 minutes without a bus in sight. Our young children were weeping as cold tears ran down their cheeks as we tried to explain to them why a bus was not there to pick us up.

It is unacceptable that the City of Kelowna would allow this to happen to its most vulnerable citizens. Many of the people would ride the bus are parents, students, seniors, disabled, or just want to lower their global footprint. On a day when buses are to come every 10 to 15 minutes, I want to know why there was no bus available to shelter my young son and I from the cold.

In my opinion, the late or non-existent buses illuminates the social inequality that the City of Kelowna perpetuates. By paying taxes and for the privilege to ride the bus, these services need to be available and accessible to everyone. Yet riding the bus is not something that everyone can participate in, as lately the buses are not arriving on time, or at all, and often getting to the bus stop is difficult for people as the sidewalks are not cleared and people with strollers, walkers, or wheelchairs are unable to get through the snow.

The City of Kelowna needs to take responsibility for vulnerable people who rely on public transportation for their mobility and freedom.

***Kelsey Wheelhouse,
Kelowna***