

STAFFING SERVICES

May 29, 2008

Mr. Alan Brown, C.E.T.
Director of Engineering
The Town of Markham
101 Town Centre Blvd
Markham, Ontario
L3R 9W3

Dear Mr. Brown,

This letter is in response to concerns expressed by Council during the May 26 General Committee meeting regarding the performance of the Adult School Crossing Guard Program this past school year. Staffing Services is aware of these concerns, specifically:

- 1) Recruiting and retaining school crossing guards for new and/or vacant stations
- 2) Absenteeism during specified crossing guard service times

These concerns are noted and are taken very seriously by Staffing Services. During the past 12 months I have received calls from seven municipalities in York Region requesting our help with their crossing guard program. Similar to the issues currently being experienced in Markham, these municipalities are having difficulty staffing new and existing stations, as well as recruiting backup crossing guards to fill in for absences. The problem is the result of an increasing fundamental change in regional demographics throughout York Region and the rest of the GTA.

To address Council concerns with respect to recruiting and retaining crossing guard staff, we have been very diligent in trying alternative means to attract/recruit qualified crossing guards to our program. As your Department is aware, Staffing Services has tried several different recruitment strategies. These approaches include, but are not limited to:

- sending flyers home with school children
- school newsletter ads
- placing mobile ad signs on school property
- using the exterior school bulletin sign board for ads
- increasing the frequency of paid newspaper advertisements
- referral bonuses for crossing guards

All of these recruitment strategies have been in place since September 2007 with no exceptional results. The citizens of Markham have not responded. However, this will not stop Staffing Services from continuing these efforts or initiating other creative solutions until we have recruited a surplus of crossing guards.

Concerns with respect to crossing guard absenteeism is directly related to the challenges in recruiting and retaining crossing guards. If a crossing guard is absent due to illness or important personal matters, we typically have a large pool of back-up crossing guards to fill the absent shift. This year our pool has been much smaller. We pay our back-up crossing guards a premium wage (\$21.87/hr.) because of the job flexibility required for the position. We also compensate mileage for staff that need to drive to the specified station.

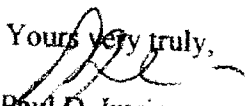
At this point, I do not believe money is the issue. If we were getting numerous calls from people responding to ads and they decided not to become a crossing guard because the pay was too low, that would be an issue. This is simply not the case. We have one of the highest, if not the highest, average pay rates for crossing guards in York Region. The average pay rate is \$16.50 per hour.

Every year we review our staff payroll and give pay increases to deserving crossing guards. The majority of crossing guards receive a pay increase in the range of 2.5% - 3.0% annually. This September, we will be initiating a program where we have one or two paid stand-by crossing guards on staff at all times. Part of their job description will also include conducting crossing guard station audits throughout the school year. These staff members will receive a daily stipend for being available whether they work a shift or not. When they are called, they receive the regular back-up rate. This should help attract more back-up staff.

We have an excellent back-up system for crossing guard absenteeism. All crossing guards are required to notify us by 6:30am when they are ill or unable to make their shift because of an emergency. We dispatch the back-up crossing guard at that time to work the station. The system has worked very well, which is evidenced by the lack of complaints being received by Town Staff and Staffing Services regarding unmanned stations. We expect that once our pool is replenished, our back-up system will be even better.

Staffing Services values the relationship with The Town of Markham. This relationship started back in 1988 when the Town was having difficulty recruiting crossing guards and called this office to fill a vacant station. The program has since grown from one crossing guard in 1988 to the current 76 stations. Markham staff has continuously been satisfied with Staffing Services, as evidenced by our 20-year relationship. Unfortunately, recent obstacles have required us to review and revise our approach, and we will continue to serve the Town diligently.

Yours very truly,


Paul D. Imrie,
President