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NEWS RELEASE

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NEW BUSES, NEW IDEAS FOR STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

VICTORIA - A \$12.5-million investment in 106 new green school buses will benefit 31 school districts in B.C., Minister of Education Margaret MacDiarmid announced today.

The cleaner-burning diesel buses reduce exhaust particulate by 90 per cent compared to the previous 1994 standard. Diesel buses also produce 30 to 60 per cent better mileage than gasoline-fuelled buses and provide longer service.

"These buses are built to meet the highest safety standards and incorporate progressively greener technology," said MacDiarmid. "While we continue to provide students with safe, comfortable transportation, we need to look at getting the best value for taxpayer dollars so that we can direct more resources to the classroom."

Approximately 1,200 buses are owned and operated by school districts, and another 600 buses are operated by bus companies under contract. Currently, school districts individually contract to buy buses from manufacturers.

"Student transportation services cost more than \$90 million annually," said MacDiarmid. "Over the coming months, we will be looking for new ways to provide bus transportation for students that will save money that can be reinvested in classrooms."

Bulk purchasing and a variety of other cost-saving options are being studied. Some districts like Prince George, Surrey and Maple Ridge contract out transportation services to private companies and benefit from reduced labour costs. Other school districts provide BC Transit bus passes to students where it makes more sense for them to travel by city bus.

"These clean-burning buses help support our goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent by 2020," said Minister of State for Climate Action John Yap. "Students are a big part of our effort to reduce carbon pollution, as the B.C. government becomes the first carbon-neutral jurisdiction in North America in 2010."

All B.C. public sector organizations are required to publicly report on their emissions levels, on the actions they have taken to reduce these levels, and their plans to minimize emissions.

For information on the dollars invested and types and numbers of buses for school districts throughout the province, visit:

http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/news/docs/2010/bg_NewSchoolBuses_100624.pdf.

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