

A Letter of Concern About a Local Issue

Level 3, Sample 1

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June 5, 2001
Member of Parliament

Dear [REDACTED],

I am writing in regard to the transit system that currently exists in [REDACTED]. In efforts to preserve the environment, I understand that public transit is a popular solution. Many cities encourage it's citizens to utilize it's transit system by providing reasonable fares, daily transportation and a frequent and regular schedule. [REDACTED] residents, however, are being discouraged to use it's transit system. The exhorbitant fare, lack of service on Sunday and infrequent and irregular schedule encourage [REDACTED] residents to find alternative methods of transportation. If the transit system is supposed to be helping the environment, greater efforts should be put forth to encourage residents to use it. I feel that a few adjustments need to be made to the current system..

As a student without a car, I depend on the transit system as a means of transportation. On Monday through Friday the buses run every hour and every half an hour during the rush hour periods (7am-10am and 3pm-6pm). On Saturday the buses run every hour and in the evening some routes are combined. On Sunday there is no bus service. Due to the infrequent service I usually find myself very uncomfortable in the often overcrowded buses. On numerous occasions the bus had passed me by as it was too full to pick up additional passengers. As a result, I had to wait another hour for the next bus to arrive. Taking the bus on Saturday is often confusing and frustrating. As there are less buses in operation, routes are often combined making them longer. It is a hassle having to make modifications to your schedule to compensate for time lost on the bus ride. Also, the lack of bus service on Sunday is an inconvenience to many [REDACTED] residents. In addition, the \$2.00 fare is quite costly. I understand that the buses run with the GO train schedule as it is during those times where they receive the most passengers. I am aware that it is fairly costly to operate buses. I am also

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aware that during certain times of the day, it is not cost effective for more buses to run as there are very few riders. I am grateful that bus service has been provided, however I feel that with a few minor adjustments, [REDACTED]'s transit system would be more successful.

During the rush hour periods there is a need for more buses. I think that by increasing the number of buses in operation during this time, the ridership would increase greatly. With the increase in ridership, the transit system would be able to decrease their fare. By increasing the frequency of the schedule, [REDACTED] residents would be encouraged to use the transit system as they would be less fearful of missing the bus. Also, there is a need for buses to run on Sunday. [REDACTED] residents need to travel every day of the week and should not be denied Sunday transportation. Please consider my requests.

Sincerely,
A concerned citizen

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Bibliography

1. www.████████transit.com
2. www.town.████████.on.ca/services/towndept_transit.asp

Teacher's Notes**Knowledge/Understanding**

- The student demonstrates considerable understanding of the civic issue, outlining the importance of public transportation and describing how his or her city's public transit system compares unfavourably with those in other cities (e.g., "The exorbitant fare, lack of service on Sunday and infrequent and irregular schedule encourage ... residents to find alternative methods of transportation.").

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student demonstrates considerable ability to conduct critical analysis, as illustrated by the well-supported assessment he or she provides of the difficulties facing the city in expanding the transit system (e.g., "buses run with the GO train schedule", "it is fairly costly to operate buses", "it is not cost effective for more buses").
- The student uses inquiry skills with considerable effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - Through a personal perspective, the student identifies specific limits to the usefulness of the current transit system (e.g., "find myself very uncomfortable in the often overcrowded buses", "the \$2.00 fare is quite costly").
 - The student identifies several ways in which the public transit system should be expanded (e.g., "During the rush hour periods there is a need for more buses").

Communication

- The student uses language and tone with considerable effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - The student's use of polite and succinct language (e.g., "I am grateful that bus service has been provided ... with a few minor adjustments, ...'s transit system would be more successful") invites a positive response.
 - The student writes clearly and effectively (e.g., "the lack of bus service on Sunday is an inconvenience to many ... residents"), although his or her use of the passive voice somewhat limits the persuasiveness of the letter.

Application

- The student makes connections with considerable effectiveness, proposing a generally realistic and reasonable solution for each of the problems identified and taking into consideration the impact on the community (e.g., the addition of more buses during rush hour would result in an increase in ridership, which would make possible a reduction in fares).

Comments/Next Steps

- The student has written an effective and persuasive letter, including relevant detail and examples in his or her presentation of opposing viewpoints.
- The student should provide comparative statistical data to support his or her argument (e.g., schedules, fares, and ridership of a comparable transit system).
- The student could poll other users and non-users of the transit system for varying points of views and analysis.
- The student's letter should have been addressed to a member of provincial Parliament, rather than a member of federal Parliament.
- The student should practise varying sentence construction (e.g., the student overuses the passive voice and begins too many sentences with "I"), and should edit more carefully to catch grammatical and spelling errors (e.g., "Many cities encourage it's citizens").

A Letter of Concern About a Local Issue Level 3, Sample 2**A**

May 25, 2001
Mayor of [REDACTED]

To the Mayor of [REDACTED]

I am writing this letter to express my concern about the dangers of second-hand smoke and the need for a ban on smoking in all public places in the city of [REDACTED]. I strongly urge the city to create a smoke-free [REDACTED], and feel that any bylaw banning smoking must be enforced without exception.

I feel that a ban on smoking in all public places will benefit the city greatly. The quality of health of all citizens will improve due to the lack of second-hand smoke. Second-hand smoke is the cause of 53,000 deaths a year. It is the third largest preventable cause of death, behind regular smoking and alcohol abuse. Second-hand smoke can be especially dangerous to young children, whose tissues are still developing. The carcinogens found in smoke are as dangerous to those inhaling them second-hand as they are to the smoker. Therefore, a smoke-free environment is in the best interests of the people, as their health is at risk when exposed to second-hand smoke.

I also recognize that 25% of the population smokes. Businesses catering to the needs of these people profit due to the service they are providing. Bar and restaurant owners resist the idea of a ban. They fear that they will lose business if a ban is imposed, but this in fact may prove to be completely untrue. Bans on smoking that have taken place in other cities have shown that if business decreases, it rapidly returns, and oftentimes business actually improves when a ban on smoking is implemented. I understand that some businesses are concerned but still feel that a ban on smoking would be hugely beneficial to the city of [REDACTED].

I feel that banning smoking in all public places would be a wise decision, but this is not enough. A bylaw would have to be strongly enforced, with no exceptions. If smoking is to be eliminated completely from public places, an effective team would need to be hired with enough members to administer this law. I believe that, as mayor of this city, you are in the best position to ensure that this bylaw is passed and effectively administered.

Sincerely
A Concerned Citizen

B**Bibliography**

[REDACTED] orders no smoking in public places – News release: <http://cbc.ca/cgi-bin/templates>

Where there's smoke ... it's usually second-hand:
<http://www.ontario.cancer.ca/SiteBoth/English/CCSA2B4C2D4E1FOGO.asp>

Teacher's Notes

Knowledge/Understanding

- The student demonstrates considerable understanding of the civic issue, describing the health risks posed by both smoking and second-hand smoke (e.g., “The carcinogens found in smoke are as dangerous to those inhaling them second-hand as they are to the smoker.”).

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student demonstrates considerable ability to conduct critical analysis of two different perspectives, clearly outlining the perspective of those opposed to the smoking ban (e.g., “Bar and restaurant owners ... fear that they will lose business if a ban is imposed”) and countering this position with evidence from other cities that have implemented similar bans (e.g., “oftentimes business actually improves ...”).
- The student uses inquiry skills with considerable effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - Statistics are used to illustrate the problem of smoking and the dangers of second-hand smoke (e.g., “25% of the population smokes”; “Second-hand smoke is the cause of 53,000 deaths a year.”), but the student does not indicate whether statistics reflect national or provincial trends.
 - The student clarifies the solution by stressing the importance of effective enforcement (e.g., “banning smoking in all public places would be a wise decision, but this is not enough. A bylaw would have to be strongly enforced”).

Communication

- The student uses language and tone with considerable effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - The writing is clear, facts are effectively integrated (e.g., “Second-hand smoke can be especially dangerous to young children, whose tissues are still developing.”), and the vocabulary is appropriate to the topic (e.g., “second-hand smoke”, “carcinogens”, “preventable cause of death”).
 - The tone is forceful and persuasive (e.g., “I strongly urge ...”, “you are in the best position to ensure that this bylaw is passed”).

Application

- The student makes connections with considerable effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - The student proposes a realistic and reasonable solution, clearly outlining the conditions necessary for an anti-smoking bylaw to be effective (i.e., the ban must apply to all public places in the city and must be adequately enforced).
 - In proposing the solution, the student takes into account its effect on various segments of the community (e.g., notes that “a smoke-free environment is in the best interests of the people, as their health is at risk ...”; reassures businesses that their counterparts in other cities did not experience long-term financial losses following similar bans).

Comments/Next Steps

- The student has created a well-written and plausible letter of concern.
- The work could be improved by a more detailed explanation of the role of the people who would administer the law.
- The work could be further improved if the student clarified some ambiguous statistical data and added more detail on local aspects of the issue.
- More careful proofreading would eliminate typographical errors (i.e., “writng”, “envirnoment”).