

**PE1098/I**

24 September 2008

F.A.O: Petition Committee

Dear Sir / Madam

Please find below my response to the letter received from The Scottish Government on 9 September 2008 regarding Petition PE1098.

After reading the correspondence from The Scottish Government, I feel that no further information that may support their stance on my Petition from their last letter dated 11 January 2008, has been provided.

It seems that our government is content with the current legislation and leaving the control of whether school buses should be fitted with seatbelts with the local authorities. I wonder if this is due to the issue of seatbelts being undeniably complex.

Whilst I am already, and have been for sometime, aware of the findings from 'School Transport – A Survey of Good Practice' I still argue that this is not sufficient enough to protect our children. The government's letter of 9 September has stated the number of Local Authorities now specifying mandatory seatbelts on ALL school buses is and has increased, surely this shows that Local Authorities believe it to be safer for school children to travel in a seat belted bus. Why should we then wait for other Authorities to follow suit? I should be able to live in any part of Scotland where my children travel to school on a bus with seatbelts, and if I happened to move to another part of Scotland I would expect the travel arrangements to be the same – why would I then compromise on the safety of my children?

I understand the theory of the Rural and Urban route differences however an accident can happen at anytime, anywhere and at any speed! I therefore do not feel that the issue of school children travelling in a bus with seatbelts should differ between Rural and Urban areas.

Regarding the Children's Right Impact Assessment I cannot see why the government would not be interested to find out the information that such an assessment would produce. It may be that the matter is too complex to tackle and the findings may not be what the government want to hear. It is easier for them to go along with the here and now.

I am disappointed with the overall response from The Scottish Government.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Merrifield