

# 'That's my mommy, please stop': Mix-up leaves Montreal sisters, 7 and 10, stuck on school bus for hours







**Mother says driver ignored daughters' plea to stop, EMSB admits it was 'big error' but new driver obeyed rules**

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One of her daughters instructed the driver to stop, Emmanuelle Porlier said, but he ignored them and kept on going for more than two hours. (Bernard LeBel/Radio-Canada)

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An east-end Montreal mother is upset after a mix-up left two of her daughters stuck on an English Montreal School Board bus for three hours Wednesday after their first day back to school.

Emmanuelle Porlier told CBC Montreal's *Daybreak* she started to worry when there was no sign of her daughters, aged 7 and 10, an hour after they were supposed to be dropped off.

That sparked a frantic effort to locate the girls.

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Porlier called their school, Edward Murphy, located in the Mercier neighbourhood, and was instructed to call the EMSB's bus contractor, Transco.

Porlier said Transco told her the girls were not on the list for that bus, and there wasn't a scheduled stop where she was expecting them.

Transco contacted the driver and asked him to return to the stop and meet her, Porlier said, but he didn't.

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"He kept going, circled the corner three times, and went to another corner to drop off other kids," she said.

## Wild goose chase

The company eventually told Porlier she could get her daughters at Michelangelo School in Rivière-des-Prairies, where the bus driver was scheduled to pick up more students.

However, when Porlier contacted officials at Michelangelo Elementary School to inquire about her daughters, she was told they weren't there.

"I was panicking, really stressed, wondering, 'Where are they?'" Porlier said.

Transco then told Porlier the driver was slow and would be returning to the company's offices instead of Michelangelo, and she could get her daughters there.

Porlier was finally reunited with the two girls three hours after their usual arrival time home from school.

One of the girls told Porlier they could see her waiting and asked the driver to stop, but he ignored them and kept on going.

"She saw me, said, 'That's my mommy, please stop and she'll pick me up,'" Porlier said. "I could have shown the driver ID to prove that they are my daughters and I'm there to pick them up but, no, he kept going and followed some kind of protocols."

## New driver 'was following the rules'

EMSB spokesperson Michael Cohen said it was the driver's first day, and he was indeed just following the rules.

"Imagine, the first bus driver on the first day, never been on the route before, never driven a bus with kids on it before, and he was following the rules," Cohen said.

Keeping the children on the bus for three hours was a "big error," Cohen acknowledged, but the driver's refusal to stop when one of the girls asked him to was understandable.

"We'd be having a whole different discussion if the bus driver did just let a seven and 10-year-old out, not knowing for certain that it was the mother or what the situation is. In that particular case, he was being prudent, and he was being safe," Cohen said.

Cohen said the mix-up stemmed from the fact the two daughters didn't qualify for busing this year but were given an exemption because their four-year-old sister was starting kindergarten.

Kindergarten only started Friday, however, meaning the older sisters, who started Wednesday, weren't on the bus list that day.

"So, as of today, they do qualify for busing, but for day one, they did not have a pass," Cohen said.

"The teacher who let them on the bus [Wednesday] was familiar with them from the bus last year and put them on."

Cohen said the EMSB "apologizes profusely" for the error, and the problem has been fixed, although he understands Porlier's lingering frustration.

"As a parent myself, I can only imagine what she was going through," he said.

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