



BusRoots

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ORLÉANS EXPRESS BUS OPERATORS PROUD OF CERTIFICATION

When Québec City marked its 400th anniversary last year, tourists from around the world visited 'la belle province' to help it celebrate.

For Groupe Orléans Express, it was a welcome opportunity to showcase a respected achievement: Certification from the Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada (MCPCC).

“We were the first inter-city business company to be certified; first with our drivers and then with our training program,” says senior driver and former trainer Marc Drolet. “It was a lot of work, but we did it and are proud of it.”

Orléans Express logs more than 12 million kilometres a year. It operates in the Montréal/Québec City inter-city route, as well as the Mauricie, Lower St. Lawrence and Gaspé regions. It welcomed the opportunity to test its training program against nationally-accredited standards recognized through MCPCC.

About 130 of the company's 175 drivers have already achieved certification. “We wanted to recognize our drivers,” Drolet explains. “A lot of people don't recognize our work as a career. We wanted to help boost the confidence of our drivers.”

The company has shared its success for all to see. Posters displayed on the back of its fleet for the past year featured five of its certified drivers. “It was really difficult to choose just five people because we have so many proud people here,” Drolet admits. “The posters



worked. A lot of people asked about certification and our drivers were proud to explain what it means.”

Orléans Express operates the youngest fleet of buses in North America. Each features a decal on the passenger side that incorporates the Bus Council logo and accreditation symbol. As well, certified drivers proudly wear a badge on the left arm of their uniform jacket, as well as a pin. “Our drivers are proud of their careers and proud to be certified,” says Drolet.

Orléans Express is currently working with the Bus Council to

produce small booklets that will be conveniently located on the back of bus seat so passengers better understand certification. “We want to let our customers know they are being driven by one of the best drivers in North America,” says Drolet.

Groupe Orléans Express Inc. is owned by President and CEO Sylvain Langis and Keolis SA, a leading private public passenger road carrier in France. “We look forward to certifying more of our drivers,” says Drolet. “If you want to keep your drivers, you have to give them a pat on the back and that's what certification does.”

SCHOOL BUS OPERATORS... GREAT PART-TIME OPTION



The reasons for choosing to become a school bus operator are as varied as the people who embrace the job, but they share a commitment to making a difference in their community.

"It appeals to retirees, stay-at-home moms or dads, those with part-time or home-based businesses, musicians, artists, writers, and in some areas, newer Canadians who are upgrading their skills over time to meet Canadian standards," says John Hollick of First Canada/Greyhound Canada in Toronto, Ontario. "What these people have in common is a love of driving and working with/helping children and the general public."

Kim Parker, a former nursery school teacher, works as a school bus operator with First Student in Midland, Ont. "It's hard for me to believe I can get paid for doing a job I love so much," she says. "I love working with the children and it's a great way to stay involved in the community."

A school bus operator typically drives three to five hours a day. When students are on holidays, so are school bus drivers. In many school districts across the country, school bus operators can bring their young children on the bus with them, which can be a huge cost savings. "The schedule also allows ample time for retirees to pursue other interests, such as golf. Most other part time jobs require shift, on-call, weekend and/or night schedules," says Hollick.

The schedule is a strong draw. "We have a young man who is part of the Calgary Opera. Driving enables him to attend rehearsals and

doesn't impact his performances, which are in the evening," says June Read of Southland Transportation in Calgary, Alberta. "We have a core of grandparents who miss their own grandchildren or were involved with coaching within their communities. Driving enables them to find fulfillment reconnecting with youth."

There can be opportunities for additional work for those who choose, such as noon routes, field trips, internal courier runs, bus washing and helping in the office. "There are (also) opportunities for advancement within our company, starting with charter driving, part-time or full-time driver training, and various office, safety, service and supervisory positions," says Hollick.

While requirements vary from one company to another, successful candidates must hold a full valid licence in the province in which they are applying, meet driving experience requirements and have good driving records.

"They will have to meet the provincially-prescribed medical requirements, and will undergo extensive criminal, background and vulnerable sector searches," says Hollick.

School bus training is usually provided by the company hiring the driver and includes safe driving techniques and risk management. In some cases, it also includes psychology and behaviour management components. "There is always a demand for those talented people who enjoy driving and want to make a difference to their community by working with youth," says Read. ☺

"It's hard for me to believe I can get paid for doing a job I love so much"

Stand Up and be Recognized as a Certified Professional Bus Operator

The Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada (MCPCC) believes strongly in the many important skills required to operate a bus safely and is encouraging the federal government to recognize those skills in the National Occupation Classification (NOC).

Bus operators are currently classified as Level C – the third of four levels – which structurally applies to jobs not requiring post-secondary education or aptitudes. But the standards of education/training and tasks needed to become a Certified Professional Bus Operator (CPBO) are equivalent to programs delivered by a college, notes Jim McKinnon, an Education & Training Consultant working with the MCPCC.

To illustrate those standards, the MCPCC documented all requirements in a Career Pathway Management Program. This program details the education, vehicle training and licensing, sector-specific certifications, on-road practicum and the period of monitored task performance necessary to become a Certified Professional Bus Operator (CPBO).

It takes three years to become a CPBO. Being reclassified as a Skill Level B will recognize the evolution of the occupation, and have implications for education and training financial assistance. At the same time, the Bus Council is calling on the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities to recognize the career as 'apprenticeable' in a pilot project that may have implications for recognition in other provinces.

The MCPCC to date has received positive feedback from the National Occupation Classification (NOC) Directorate of the federal government. However, we have been advised that the NOC is closely linked to Statistics Canada data gathered through the Census process which identifies the number of people within an occupation. Therefore, the number of CPBO's recorded in the Census is equally important to the job and competency description.

Stand up and be counted! At the next Census seize the opportunity and complete the 'occupation' portion of your census forms with 'Certified Professional Bus Operator. ☺



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION KEY TO SUCCESS OF OLYMPICS

In just a few months, the eyes of the world will be focused on British Columbia as it hosts the 2010 Olympic and Para Olympic Winter Games. Just as athletes are preparing for success, public transportation providers also have their eyes on delivering a gold-medal performance.

It's a monumental task but one that is key to the success of delivering thousands of workers, volunteers, spectators and visitors from the host city of Vancouver to venue cities of Richmond and the majestic mountains of Whistler.

"The Olympics bring up five different networks or systems, including the Olympic Bus Network operated by the Vancouver Olympic Committee, which will have close to 1,000 coaches," says Ken Hardie of TransLink. "Transportation for spectators, volunteers and workforce will be provided from three park 'n ride facilities in Vancouver, North Vancouver and Burnaby to mountain venues, including Cypress Bowl and Whistler."

TransLink has a robust transit system within Metro Vancouver that includes commuter rail, rapid transit, passenger ferries and buses. "Most of the service we're bringing in for the Olympics will remain after the Games," says Hardie. That service includes the addition of 48 rail cars to the Expo and Millennium Lines. The new Canada Line opened this past summer and further enhances the system.

"Over the last few years, we have also added about 300 buses to the fleet," says Hardie. "For the Games, approximately 160 buses will be used to handle surges in demand."

Bus operators are bracing for crowds, traffic and reroutes but looking forward to the challenge. "Not since Expo '86 has Vancouver's transit system been put to the test with international visitors as it will have in February," says Brian Revel, a transit operator with Coast Mountain Bus Company. "But we'll be ready for them. And you'll find me in the middle of it all."

BC Transit is the provincial crown agency charged with coordinating the delivery of public transportation throughout British Columbia (outside the Greater Vancouver Regional District). Responsibility for public transportation in the Lower Mainland was transferred to the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (TransLink) in 1999.

BC Transit is the official public transportation provider for the 2010 Winter Games in the mountain area. "We will be increasing our service hours by fivefold," reports spokesperson Joanna Morton. During the month of February, bus service will increase from 8,400 to 42,900 hours.

The fleet serving the mountain area will increase from 39 to 135 buses and a large portion of those buses will operate around the clock. "We need to fill about 300 positions," Morton says of the need for drivers to supplement the current staff of 50. "Among other initiatives, the Canadian Urban Transit Association is helping put the word out to other transit systems across the country ... We look forward to showcasing BC Transit on a worldwide front." 🌐



April 20-22, 2010
Mississauga, Ontario

The Ontario Transportation Expo and Conference.

This joint event is organized by three partnering associations - The Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA), The Ontario Public Transportation Association (OPTA), and The Ontario School Bus Association (OSBA). The only trade show of its kind combining the school bus, motor coach, public transit and community transportation industries in one location! There are suppliers, manufacturers, and consultants of equipment, parts, products and services from all industries. A worthwhile investment of time! Visit www.ote.ca.

May 16-19, 2010
Ottawa, Ontario

The Canadian Pupil Transportation Conference (CPTC).

Theme: "A Cross Country Showcase"

Ontario is hosting the 6th year of this national conference and trade show in our nation's capital. CPTC will provide attendees with superior opportunities to discover innovative best practices and seize leading edge strategies for management of student transportation. Visit www.cptc2010.ca.

May 15-19, 2010
Ottawa, Ontario

Canadian Urban Transit Association Annual Conference.

Theme: "Vision 2040"


Will provide an opportunity for transit professionals to look into the future.

Pre-Employment Education Program (PEEP)

A new recruiting and educational tool will help candidates considering a career as a Certified Professional Bus Operator (CPBO) familiarize themselves with the education, skills and tasks they will require. It also helps them understand what the industry expects of them and what they may expect of the industry.

The Pre-Employment Education Program (PEEP) takes National Occupational Standards content and presents it in an interactive and narrative format. The curriculum is being developed by a consortium of community colleges led by Ontario's Durham College and Nova Scotia Community College.

The program will be regionally delivered online by community colleges and accessible at Canadian Employment Resource Centres and through the Bus Council website. A total of five modules will be available by the end of the year. It will take about 30 to 35 hours to complete.

At the end of each module, candidates can complete a course to earn a certificate in such things as risk assessment and conflict resolution. Even if they choose not to pursue a career as a CPBO, they may take the certificates – jointly signed by the Bus Council and community college – to another industry. 

Putting Careers in Gear

Do you know someone interested in a career in the busing industry? You can help them put their career in gear by letting them know opportunities exist in all sectors of our vibrant industry:

- Bus mechanic
- School bus operator
- Inter-city bus operator
- Tour and charter coach operator
- Urban bus operator
- Accessible services operator

Interested candidates can learn more at www.driveabus.ca, an informative Bus Council website.



Did you know?

- Canadian transit ridership set a sixth consecutive all-time record last year with 1.82 billion transit trips – that's a 3.5% increase over 2007 and a 16% increase over a five-year period beginning in 2003. Ridership grew by 4.5% in the second half of 2008 compared to the same period a year earlier – the same time the economy started to fall into recession and unemployment was on the rise. (Canadian Urban Transit Association)
- School bus travel is one of the safest methods of transportation. It is 16 times safer than travelling in a family car per passenger/kilometre of travel. (Transport Canada)
- Bus Operators represent 68% of our industry's workforce and need to be knowledgeable about driver-related mechanical systems, scheduling, safe driving practices and road regulations, interpersonal skills, special needs passengers, and, in the case of Tour Bus Operators, sightseeing information. (Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada)

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

This is truly your newsletter, written for and about Canada's professional Bus Operators. So, to keep it relevant and interesting to you, please let us know what you think, and the types of stories you'd like to see. Better yet – if you have a great story about how you dealt with a tricky situation, professional tips, interesting 'life on the road' anecdote, or an outstanding achievement of yours or a colleague, please contact us at the address below. And, please remember to send us any change of your address, so that you can continue to receive your copy of BusRoots.

Visit us online at www.buscouncil.ca



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Please submit your story ideas, feedback and comments to: editor@buscouncil.ca or **Editor, BusRoots**, Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada, 9555 Yonge Street, Suite 306, Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4C 9M5.

We reserve the right to edit submissions for content and length.