



# BusRoots

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## BUS COUNCIL CELEBRATES 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

*The Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada (MCPCC) has made tremendous strides for the bus industry and its employees since it was established 10 years ago, including the development of the world's first bus operator certification program. And we will promote this professionalism, assures executive director and CEO Joan Crawford.*



Motor Carrier Passenger Council Of Canada  
Conseil canadien du transport de passagers

The Council has received funding from Human Resources Development Canada to market its innovative bus operator certification and driver training accreditation programs over the next three years. "We will be sharing information with bus companies and helping them through the application process," says Crawford. "The programs are definitely doing what they're supposed to do, which is ensuring driver training meets rigorous bus industry endorsed national standards."

Also on the Council's agenda is the National Occupational Classification of bus drivers. They are currently classified as Level C – the third of four levels – which structurally applies to jobs not requiring post-secondary education or aptitudes. "It takes three years for a bus driver to become certified," Crawford notes.

"We have submitted an application advocating that the training delivered by accredited bus companies is equivalent to the training delivered by colleges – some of which have used Bus Council standards to develop curriculum for their bus operator training programs," Crawford notes. "We're asking the government to recognize the significant change over the past 20 years to the role of the bus operators by changing the classification from a Level C to a Level B."

The Council is developing a pre-employment education e-learning tool that will allow potential candidates to determine if they're

suited to a career as a bus driver before they begin training. "We know that up to 30% of new drivers in some cases do not complete the training process for various reasons. Some simply aren't suited to the career," Crawford says. "We hope this tool will reduce the amount of non-completes and assist candidates in assessing their suitability for this occupation."

After successfully developing National Occupational Standards for bus drivers, the Council has set its sights on developing new standards for driver trainers. That project gets underway in September and will take 18 months, consulting with industry each step of the way. MCPCC will also create an online resource centre called [www.busgurus.ca](http://www.busgurus.ca), also slated to launch this fall. "It's a place where the best minds of the industry can gather," says Crawford.

Looking back over the past 10 years, MCPCC was established following a study that concluded there was a need to bring all sectors of the industry together to address human resources issues particularly the recognition for bus operators and standards for training. "We are the first organization to bring together all sectors of the busing industry – urban, school and inter-city bus operators, accessible services, and tour and charter coach operators, and bus mechanics – along with labour, education and government to share ideas and information," says Crawford. "We are definitely a consensus-based organization." 🍁

# BC TRANSIT LAUDS ACCREDITATION, CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

*It's one of the largest transit companies in Canada and has a long history of leadership and innovation.*

*John Palmer, Supervisor Safety & Training BC Transit hand delivering their training program to Nancy Allen Deane, Director of Administration of the Bus Council of Canada.*



Not only was BC Transit the first in North America to introduce double-decker buses to its regular service, it is also testing the continent's first hybrid double-decker bus.

This industry leader welcomed the opportunity to test its training program against nationally-accredited standards established by the Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada (MCPCC). "We wanted to test our training program against the best in the country and were very pleased with the feedback we received," says John Palmer, supervisor of safety and training.

"BC Transit is very unique because it oversees 81 transit systems across the province in over 50 communities," he explains. "We have a fleet hovering close to 1,000 buses and a team of 1,500 to 1,800 operators. We have to think about how we provide consistency and ensure that a driver in Kitimat in northern BC gets the same training as a driver in Victoria."

BC Transit is creating a training manual template for each of its partners. Accreditation also paves the way for it to formally recognize and designate licensed bus operators who have successfully

achieved a combination of training and real-life experience.

The Bus Council's certification program is the first of its kind in the world for the bus industry. "Driving a bus is a complicated, stressful job," says Palmer. "We are going to recognize their certification in a number of ways."

He encourages fellow transit companies to take advantage of MCPCC's accreditation program. "If you're worried your training won't meet national standards, you'll receive the help you need to achieve those standards," says Palmer. "We will embark on an aggressive campaign with our drivers and the public to let them know that we meet those high standards. Mutual respect is a bond between drivers and customers and we believe certification will help foster that respect."

BC Transit looks forward to a nationally-accredited program currently being developed by MCPCC for operator instructors. "We're not stopping here," says Palmer. "We're so pleased MCPCC is ready to take that next step." 🍀

## BRAVO TO DRIVERS WHO MADE HEADLINES

### Imagine finding a bag filled with \$80,000.

Some people might be tempted to keep it – particularly when the discovery was made just before Christmas – but bus driver Rick Bazinet knew the right thing to do was to return it to its rightful owner.

The London Transit driver found the Brinks bag when he stopped at Tim Hortons for a coffee and a washroom break, the *London Free Press* reported in March. "That's the way I was brought up and it's what I teach my children," the married father of three young children said of his decision to turn over the bag filled with "bricks" of \$20 bills.

The bag of money was sitting on a counter just outside the washroom. As Bazinet suspected, the money was left behind by Brinks guards filling the ATM in the Ontario coffee shop.

### Re-united

In Alberta, Calgary Transit driver Dawn Hagel made headlines after rescuing a dog from circling coyotes in April, prompting kudos from city officials. The attentive driver noticed the coyotes circling a parked truck, under which they had trapped a young Australian cattle dog.

"The driver moved her community shuttle closer to the young dog and opened the door of the bus," the City of Calgary said in a news release. "The frightened pooch hopped on with little or no coaxing and was cared for by customers on the bus while the driver carried on her route."

The dog was later reunited with its grateful owner.



*Accreditation is a nationally-recognized validation of in-house training programs that underscores a bus company's commitment to the highest standards in training, on-the-road performance, safety, customer service and service delivery.*

*The Accreditation Board's panel of industry and academic experts carefully reviews each application and grants its approval to programs that meet or exceed requirements.*

## 'GRANDFATHER OF HUNDREDS' EARNS SCHOOL BUS DRIVER AWARD

*He considers himself a privileged man. "How many of us are lucky enough to have more than 100 grandchildren," Bob Loat says of his second career as a school bus driver in British Columbia.*



Loat had a commercial license since 1964 and served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 34 years before retiring in 1994. Three years later, he began his career as a school bus driver with the Chilliwack School District. "I've always liked driving and love kids," says the longtime Boy Scouts leader. "Driving a school bus turned out to be a perfect fit. I could be retired, but I love what I do."

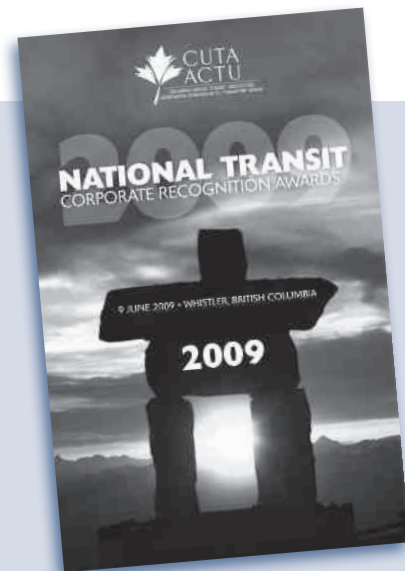
The Association of School Transportation Supervisors of British Columbia School selected Loat as Bus Driver of the Year 2008. The award recognizes a driver's professionalism, attitude and ability to manage students, as well as their driver's abstract.

Loat recalls his first year behind the school bus wheel, when a kindergarten student issued her driver a challenge. "She asked me how old I was and I told her I was 57. A week later, she told me I wasn't allowed to retire

until she graduated from high school because she didn't want anyone else driving her to school. Last summer, this girl and her brother gave me a gift and in the card she reminded me, 'Just four years to go.'"

Loat takes pride in his tremendous responsibilities of delivering students to and from school safely. "I have a 2,000-foot difference in elevation from one point of my route to another," he says. "It can be raining in one area and snowing in another. I always have to be prepared for a variety of conditions."

Now 65, Loat enjoys driving a school bus as much today as when he first got behind the wheel. "These kids are really like my grandchildren. I don't have any plans to retire. I just enjoy it so much. As long as I have my health, I see myself behind the wheel," the Chilliwack resident assures. ☺



The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) presented the 2009 National Transit Corporation Recognition Awards on June 9 in Whistler, British Columbia. Award recipients include the following:

### Safety:

Grand River Transit/Region of Waterloo for its transit fleet maintenance quality assurance program and Calgary Transit for its safety and cleanliness initiatives.

### Innovation:

St. John's Transportation Commission for its 'Play Your Part' marketing campaign and Société de transport de Montréal for its strategic market development.

### Exceptional Performance/ Outstanding Achievement:

Transit Windsor for its Student Ambassadors: Connecting Students with Transit program; Edmonton Transit System for paying tribute to the role public transit has played in Edmonton's growth during the city's centennial celebrations; Société de transport de Montréal for its SmartDRIVER program; Whistler and Valley Express Transit System for noteworthy cost recovery; the Town of Cobourg for its special needs transit service; and BC Transit – Salt Spring Island Transit for exceptional service and outstanding performance.

## MEETING DEMAND FOR BUS MECHANICS

They maintain, repair and service the country's fleet of buses. Bus mechanics and maintenance staff represent 7% of the bus industry's workforce and are in high demand. The Bus Council hopes to address the shortage and retention of heavy duty mechanics through several initiatives, including education.

In 2007, the Council formed a Skilled Trades Commission that brought together members from industry, labour, government, education and manufacturing. It conducted a training analysis that found up to 18 bus competencies are not taught in current heavy duty mechanic training programs offered at community colleges.

"We have been working with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the industry and Centennial College and hope to add those competencies as an endorsement to existing heavy duty mechanic programs," says Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada executive director and CEO Joan Crawford. "We hope to get funding to start 20 applicants at Centennial College this fall. This pilot opens the door for similar programs in other provinces." 🍀

## PUT YOUR CAREER 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
- Urban bus operator
- School bus operator
- Accessible services operator
- Inter-city bus operator
- Tour and charter coach operator

Interested candidates can learn more at [www.driveabus.ca](http://www.driveabus.ca), an informative Bus Council website.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- One busload of passengers takes 40 vehicles off the road during rush hour, saves 70,000 litres of fuel and avoids over 175 tonnes of emissions a year. (Clean Air Day Canada, Environment Canada)
- Every day, thousands of bus professionals are responsible for transporting millions of Canadian workers, students, seniors, vacationers and people with special needs. Canada's bus industry employs 95,000 dedicated, well-trained, service-driven men and women from coast to coast. (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](http://www.buscouncil.ca)



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