

# jobboom • BEHIND THE WHEEL



## Bus operators put careers in gear

### JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Current job opportunities in the busing industry include:

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

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**LINDA WHITE**  
Special to Sun Media

They're behind the wheels of the familiar yellow school buses that deliver students to and from school and the motor coaches that transport passengers along scenic routes across North America. Bus operators enjoy the benefits of a portable skill that's consistently in demand.

"We're always looking for skilled and qualified people," says Joan Crawford, executive director and CEO of the Motor Carrier Passenger

Council of Canada (MCPCC). "We are a growing industry."

She points to the 2006 Statistics Canada figures that indicate revenue increased 11.3% to \$9.6 billion and employment rose 5.5% to more than 94,000 people across Canada over the previous year.

With 40% of bus operators aged 45-64 years, more than one-third will be retiring over the next 10 years, the MCPCC reports. It's actively encouraging men and women aged 18 to 25 years to consider careers as bus operators, but it also welcomes

older workers and those looking for a second careers.

Bus operators represent 68% of the industry's workforce. Most companies are looking for drivers with at least a G driver's licence in good standing, Crawford reports. Training is typically provided by the company hiring the driver and is often an ongoing process throughout the operator's career.

Mechanics and maintenance staff represent 7% of the industry's workforce. They inspect, troubleshoot, repair, replace and maintain operating systems and components, and are in particular demand among urban transit and inter-city carriers. The MCPCC is hoping to attract skilled trades to the industry through apprenticeship opportunities.

"It's an industry of opportunity in all sectors," Crawford says. "We do have a good track record of promoting from within ... There is a career path within our industry, along with other benefits: a lot of stability, a lot of growth, a lot of portability. We are looking for drivers across Canada."

The industry provides a wide range of career opportunities, including part-time and full-time work. The school bus industry, for example, is particularly attractive to drivers who want to work part-time, including stay-at-home parents and retirees.

"School bus drivers have the flexibility of part-time work that allows their own children to ride along," says Glenn Attridge, vice-president of Attridge Transportation, the largest privately-owned school busing company in Ontario.

It has a fleet of more than 500

school bus vehicles that service school boards in Hamilton, Wentworth, Dufferin, Halton and Peel regions. Training is provided at no charge to upgrade qualified applicants from a valid class G to a class B or E licence.

"School bus driving is steady employment that is an essential service to the local community," Attridge says. "Bus drivers enjoy a great sense of responsibility while safely transporting children to and from school. This part-time job allows drivers to participate in other activities midday and offers the possibility of additional income through charter trips."

Urban bus operators can work a variety of day and evening shifts, while tour coach operators enjoy the benefits of travel and can be on the road for up to a month at a time.

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## THE RIGHT STUFF

Bus operators require a variety of skills. In addition to being cautious, good drivers, they need to be knowledgeable about driver-related mechanical systems, scheduling, safe driving practices and road regulations.

Interpersonal, problem-solving, decision-making and organizational skills are important. Further computerization of fare boxes and location systems will call for a greater knowledge of computers.

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