



Office of the Auditor General of Ontario
Bureau de la vérificatrice générale de l'Ontario

Value-for-money audit of:
Student Transportation

2015 Annual Report, Section 3.13

Background

- Ministry provided approximately \$880 million to school boards in 2014/15 for student transportation
- 830,000 students, 70% of them in elementary school, transported daily to and from publicly funded schools on 19,000 vehicles, including buses, vans and cars
- Almost all student transportation provided through contracts with school bus operators
- Parties involved in student transportation include ministries of Education and Transportation, school bus operators, province's 72 school boards, and 33 transportation consortia



Audit Objective

Assess whether effective systems and procedures were in place to:

- safely and efficiently transport elementary and secondary school students;
- ensure the level of service across the province is equitable and based on need; and
- measure and report on performance in this regard.



Overall Conclusions

- Ministry of Transportation had little oversight of bus operators, who were allowed to certify their own buses for mechanical fitness
- Ministry of Education has not mandated bus safety training for students, and only 16 of the 33 consortia had mandatory general school bus safety training
- Funding for school transportation does not take into account local factors that significantly influence transportation costs



Specific Findings

- School vehicles involved in more collisions proportionately than cars and trucks in 2013, with school bus drivers at fault in 40% of cases
- Ministry of Transportation's bus-inspection tracking system lists about 16,000 vehicles, but consortia reported having 19,000 vehicles on the road
- Only about 50% of consortia competitively procured transportation services, and the weighting of safety criteria in procurement varied significantly among the consortia we visited



Recommendations

- Consortia should improve oversight of school bus operators to ensure compliance with legal and contract requirements
- Ministry of Transportation should focus inspections on high-risk school buses; complete inspections within required timeframes; and ensure defects are rectified
- Ministry of Education should set eligibility standards for transportation services to promote greater consistency across the province



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