



Auditor General of Ontario & Ontario Ombudsman – Student Transportation Follow Up Audit Update – March 2021

To: Audit Committee

Date: 22 March, 2021

Report No.: 03-21-4051

Strategic Directions

- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Auditor General of Ontario & Ontario Ombudsman – Student Transportation Follow Up Audit Update – March 2021 be received.

Context

Background:

Auditor General of Ontario:

In December 2015, the Auditor General of Ontario issued their audit on Student Transportation. As part of their audit, three transportation consortia were selected: Sudbury Student Services Consortium (serving five school boards), Student Transportation of Peel Region (serving two school boards) and the Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG), of which TDSB is a member along with Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). Of the 15 recommendations, two related to the transportation consortia:

- Recommendation #1 – Oversight of school bus operators re: compliance and vehicle condition, incident and driver turnover tracking
- Recommendation #12 – Use data and technology as well as staggering bell times and coordinating common days off to increase efficiency and reduce costs

The remaining recommendations were directed at the Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Education.

Ontario Ombudsman Office:

In August 2017, the Ontario Ombudsman's Office released their report relating to student transportation in the 2016-17 school year when more than 1,000 students at the TDSB and TCDSB were affected by delays, route changes and a driver shortage. The Ombudsman's report contained 42 recommendations which TSTG accepted. The recommendations included, among other things, developing a school bus transportation complaint procedure, a communication protocol to ensure parents, school boards and other stakeholders are notified of service disruptions, and contingency staffing plans.

Update:

Auditor General of Ontario:

One outstanding item (recommendation 12) remains relating to increased efficiency of school transportation services. Of the five action items included in the recommendation, three are in the process of being implemented, one has been completed (introduction of staggered bell times, reducing the number of buses required) and one action will not be implemented (coordinating common days off between both Boards). It should be noted that common days off has been introduced in the elementary panel but not the secondary panel. The Auditor General is in the process of conducting the annual follow up for 2021.

Ontario Ombudsman:

The Special Ombudsman Response Team is following up on the implementation of the recommendations and noted they only received four complaints about school bus delays or driver shortages in the two boards during fiscal 2019-2020, compared to 120 in September 2016. The last follow up conducted in March 2019, found that 34 of the 42 recommendations had been fully or partially implemented, with the remaining expected to be completed when transportation contracts are renewed. The Ombudsman has conducted an annual follow up with reporting expected later in the year.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

For reporting purposes only.

Resource Implications

No internal resource implications.

Communications Considerations

Included in public Audit Committee minutes.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

N/A – O.Reg 361/10, Auditor Act of Ontario and Ombudsman Act of Ontario are applicable.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Auditor General of Ontario Student Transportation – 2015
- Appendix B: Auditor General of Ontario Student Transportation Follow Up – 2019
- Appendix C: Ontario Ombudsman Route of the Problem report – 2017

From

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