

LABOUR MARKET NEWS

Alberta
Employment, Immigration
and Industry

Fort McMurray • Wood Buffalo



Driven to succeed

Regardless of the kind of bus a person drives, one thing is required—bus drivers have to like working with the public.

“You have to be a people person,” says Race Dixon, training supervisor with Diversified Transportation. “You have to like people and want to be around them, because that’s what you’re hauling.”

For those who like driving jobs, but don’t like the long trips of truck driving or long hours of driving a taxi, there is another in-demand

driving job available in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB)—bus driving. And there are options to suit any schedule, both part-time and full-time work.

The two major companies that hire out of Fort McMurray are Sparksman Transportation (school buses) and Diversified (coach, transit and yellow buses). In January, Diversified forecasted that they would need to hire 350 to 400 bus drivers this year alone. They presently have about 459 full-time drivers (700 total employees).

The job of a bus driver is to transport passengers along established routes, from place to place within the municipality. A driver can operate:

- transit buses in Fort McMurray
- motor coaches from Fort McMurray to other centres in Alberta
- coaches from Fort McMurray to oilsands security gates
- yellow buses for school runs
- yellow buses from oilsands security gates into designated areas within the sites.

Duties

Bus drivers’ duties vary depending on the kind of bus they are operating and the type of service they are providing. Common job responsibilities include:

- operating vehicle in a safe and courteous manner



Tracy King is a school bus driver with Sparksman Transportation. Sparksman provides student transportation for the Fort McMurray Catholic and public school districts, as well as Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord.

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Labour Market News ...

Camp accommodations

This publication has been prepared by Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry. Find us online at www.woodbuffalo.net.

Who's hiring?

There are many opportunities available in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo if you are interested in driving a bus, whether it be transit, coach or school bus.

Diversified Transportation

Hiring: Transit, coach and yellow bus divisions

Contact: Drop off résumé or fill out application at the Transfer Station, 2nd Floor, Highway 63

Fax: (780) 715-3512

www.dtlcareers.com

Sparksman Transportation

Hiring: School bus drivers

Contact: Drop off résumé or fill out application at 8030 Golosky Avenue

Fax: (780) 790-3964

E-mail: carolynw@sparksmantransportation.ca

Red Arrow Motorcoach*

Hiring: Coach operators

Contact: www.redarrow.ca

Fax: (403) 264-1004

Email: employment@redarrow.ca

Greyhound Canada Transportation*

Hiring: Coach operators

Contact: www.greyhound.ca

* Hiring for Red Arrow and Greyhound is not done in Fort McMurray. Hiring is done in Edmonton or Calgary and applications are accepted on their websites. They are included because they have stops here.



Transit bus drivers are needed in Fort McMurray for a number of different runs and shifts. Drivers work anywhere from 30 to 42 hours a week.

- following established routes and time schedules
- inspecting vehicles before and after trip
- submitting reports at the end of every trip and collision reports when necessary
- dealing with difficult passengers and hazards associated with driving in bad weather conditions, on poor driving surfaces and in heavy traffic.

Is driving for you?

Driving a bus is not for everyone. While it is not hard physical work, it can be stressful at times and when dealing with the public certain decorum is required. Some of the personal characteristics that a bus driver should have are:

- good health and vision
- good communication skills
- the ability to be diplomatic and courteous when dealing with the public
- the ability to remain alert and maintain a high level of concentration
- good judgement and the ability to react quickly in emergency situations.

Bus drivers should also love driving and be able to take a methodical approach to recording information and inspecting vehicles.

School Bus Driving

The company that provides transportation for school-aged children in the RMWB is Sparksman Transportation. They want to hire at

least 12 drivers before the start of the 2007/2008 school year to fill their 45 runs. A typical shift runs from about 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., and the return trip in the afternoon is from about 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

“There’s also a fair bit of work available during the day, which many people don’t realize—Kindergarten runs, special education runs and field trips,” says Carolyn Wozniak, branch manager for Sparksman. “These kids are constantly on the go, so we have some drivers that are driving eight hours a day—and we could use more of them. We generally don’t attract people who want to work eight hours a day, so filling the extra runs is just as difficult as getting someone for a regular morning and afternoon run.”

Target employees

About 70 per cent of Sparksman’s drivers are young mothers. Drivers can take their young children on the bus with them and they work within the school year.

The job also appeals to semi-retired people or others who want less than full-time hours.

“It’s still full time, but it’s only 185 days a year, so they’ve got all of those natural breaks throughout the school year,” says Wozniak.

Wages & training

Sparksman pays a starting wage of \$15.75 per hour and drivers work their way up to \$17.50 with experience. They also guarantee their drivers four hours a day of work, so even if their runs (morning and



Diversified Transportation has predicted that it will need between 350 and 400 bus drivers this year in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo to fill positions in their three divisions: coach, yellow bus and transit.

afternoon) take less time they are still paid for four hours.

In order to drive a school bus, drivers must have their Class 2 licence, but Sparksman will hire and train drivers with a Class 5 licence. The two-week training class prepares them for the Class 2 licence. Applicants need a driver's abstract, a criminal record check and a medical.

After passing the Class 2 test, drivers take an S endorsement, which is a School Bus Driver Safety Improvement Program. It includes training such as defensive driving, first aid and working with special needs children. Sparksman also has ongoing training for their drivers such as student management and proper use of an Epipen.

"It would be nice to get someone with experience, but we don't expect it," says Wozniak. "We wan drivers who like children, like to drive, are willing to take all of the training classes and be committed. It's a job with an awful lot of responsibility and I don't think people realize that. We need someone who can commit to 185 days a year."

To apply for a job driving a school bus in Fort McMurray, see **Who's hiring?** on page 2.

Coach bus driving

There are two kinds of coach jobs in the RMWB.

The coach runs that go from Fort McMurray to other centres in Alberta are operated by either Red Arrow or Greyhound. Both companies do not hire in Fort McMurray. See page 2 for contact information.

Diversified Transportation coach buses transport oilsands workers from Fort McMurray out to the major oilsands projects. The split shifts are three to four hours in the morning and then again in the late afternoon or early evening.

In order to drive a coach, drivers must have a Class 1 or Class 2 with airbrake endorsement. A driver, no matter what their previous experience, is given 25 to 30 hours of behind-the-wheel and classroom training. Drivers also receive company orientation, Oil Sands Safety Association training (which allows site access) and dispatch training.

Wages for coach drivers are \$85 for each one-way trip, plus benefits and pension.

Yellow bus driving

Yellow bus drivers are also in demand and hired by Diversified to transport oilsands workers from camps or from the security gates into construction areas in the sites. They need a Class 2 licence, but Diversified will hire someone with a Class 5, put them through a two-

week training program and upgrade their licence to a Class 2. Yellow bus drivers go through the same classroom training as a coach driver, but complete two additional weeks of driver training. They are paid \$75 per one-way trip, plus benefits and pension.

Transit bus driving

Diversified also provides buses, maintenance and drivers for transit service in Fort McMurray. Transit drivers are paid \$22 per hour and they work between 30 and 42 hours a week. Hours vary but fall between 6:45 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Housing help

Because of housing shortages and the high cost of accommodations in Fort McMurray, Diversified has started helping employees with an extra allowance. All full-time employees are eligible for \$1,000 per month (taxable) housing allowance. Diversified may also provide camp accommodations for their coach or yellow bus drivers (these workers do not get the \$1,000 allowance). They presently have 80 people living in camps.

"That's one of the first things people ask when they call because they've checked out the websites and seen it can be almost \$1,900 for a one-bedroom apartment—it's kind of frightening," said Dixon.

"You have to like people and want to be around them, because that's what you're hauling."

Looking for career and employment information?

Employer Connections

Employer Connections are now held regularly at the Fort McMurray Labour Market information Centre (LMIC). Job seekers and career changers can meet employers face-to-face to find out about current job vacancies. They are basically mini job fairs to help employers meet prospective employees.

Interview preparation

Be prepared to have an interview at the event, so dress professionally and research the company before you attend. It is recommended that job seekers bring an up-to-date résumé.

Details

To find out dates and which employers are scheduled:

- visit www.woodbuffalo.net/mediaEVENT.html
- call the LMIC at (780) 743-7149
- watch for posted event information at the LMIC
- or visit the Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry website at employment.alberta.ca.

Employer Connections

is held at the
**Fort McMurray
 Labour Market
 Information Centre**
 Main Floor, Provincial
 Building
 9915 Franklin Avenue
 Fort McMurray, AB



Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry Offices

Fort McMurray

Labour Market Information

Phone (780) 715-0222

info@woodbuffalo.net

Canada-Alberta Service Centre

Labour Market Information Centre

Provincial Building

9915 Franklin Avenue

Phone (780) 743-7192

Other career & employment services

Fort McMurray

Lokken Career Training

#100, 9816 Hardin Street

Phone (780) 799-4667

Fort McMurray Association for Community

Living - CHOICES Employment Services

10010 Franklin Avenue, (780) 791-3355

YMCA - Youth Connections

#201, 10011 Franklin Avenue

Phone (780) 791-7520

Franco Job

312 Abasand Drive

Centre Communautaire Scolaire, Boréal

(780) 791-9779

Athabasca Tribal Council Employment

9206 McCormick Drive

Phone (780) 791-7445

Métis Employment Centre (itinerant service to Janvier)

Bay 301, Tamarack Village

9612 Franklin Avenue

Phone (780) 714-3029

Keyano College Career Employment Services

Phone (780) 799-1589

Fort McKay

Fort McKay First Nation Employment & Training Office

Phone (780) 828-2433, appointments only

Conklin

Conklin Employment Services

Nakewin Centre, Conklin

Phone (780) 559-8995

Employment and Training

Aboriginal Mine Works Program

Phone (780) 791-9946

Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project

Phone (780) 715-3630

Fort McMurray - Alberta Labour Market Information

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Check us out!

We have improved the [woodbuffalo.net](http://www.woodbuffalo.net) website to make it more appealing and easier to use. Better yet, we have kept all of the best information that you have come to rely on. Visit us for labour market information, company listings, housing information and everything else related to working in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

www.woodbuffalo.net

Call the Wood Buffalo Labour Market Information Hotline at (780) 715-0222

E-mail: info@woodbuffalo.net