

Chapter 36

Transporting Students Safely

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of Education (Ministry) is responsible for leadership and oversight in the education sector. *The Education Act, 1995* gives responsibility to school divisions to administer student transportation and expects school boards to supervise student transportation. We audited the safety of student transportation processes in six school divisions and the related processes at the Ministry of Education for the period September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012.

In this chapter, we describe the key findings of our audit of student transportation and make 14 recommendations to the Ministry and to school divisions.

Our audit concluded that student transportation requires Ministry coordination and oversight. Ministry oversight would help school divisions to comply with all the relevant legislation and consistently use strategies that would help keep students safe while they are transported. For example, the Ministry should require school divisions to use key strategies related to the condition of vehicles, the performance of drivers, the behaviour of students on the bus, and collision risks.

Our audit also concluded that, in general, school divisions had effective processes to transport students safely except in three areas. First, school divisions should consistently align their practices with legislation. Second, school divisions should manage transportation risks more consistently. For example, school divisions took different approaches to transporting students who lived near their school, transporting pre-schoolers, driver training, driver performance appraisal, and the use of 15-passenger vans. Third, school divisions that contract with private companies to provide some or all of their transportation services should require their contractors to report on how they comply with laws and the strategies they use to keep students safe while they are being transported to and from school.

These findings may help other school divisions in the province when assessing their own student transportation processes. As well, we outline some of the best practices we observed in school divisions in **Exhibit 1**.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education (Ministry) is responsible for all matters relating to early learning, elementary, and secondary education. It is expected to provide leadership and coordination in all areas. School divisions are responsible for administering schools and for managing student transportation. The Ministry provides grants to school divisions of about \$110 million annually to transport students.^{1,2} In this way, the Ministry has a vested interest to ensure that the funds it provides are used effectively.

¹ Ministry of Education Annual Report 2011-12, p. 6.

² Estimate based on school divisions' audited financial statements for the year ending August 31, 2011.



In this audit, board of education/school board (School Board) refers to all boards governing school divisions, including the conseil scolaire that governs all French language schools. School division refers to organizations that are accountable to administer and manage schools whether the schools are public, separate, or French language schools.

Saskatchewan's 28 school divisions administer and manage over 700 schools. Over 74,000 children³ (38% of students) ride school buses each day. About 1,300 of them are four- to five-year old children in pre-kindergarten programs.⁴ Some school divisions transport as many as 4,500 students every day. About 3,400 school buses and 50 school vans transport students.⁵

Transporting students supports regular and timely attendance at school. We audited processes to safely transport students to school or special events arranged by schools.

3.0 BACKGROUND - RISKS IN TRANSPORTING STUDENTS

Effective transportation helps students to start their day ready to learn. Transporting students safely is a complex process influenced by four key factors or risk areas:

- › Vehicle condition (maintenance, age, nature of vehicle such as bus or van)
- › Bus driver competence (knowledge of laws, skill, rapport with students)
- › Student behaviour while bus is moving (stay seated, avoid distracting the driver)
- › Collision risks (bus route, road conditions, weather)

On average, 84 collisions involving school buses occurred each year over the last decade. For example, in 2010, standard-size school buses had 71 collisions, including vehicle pedestrian collisions, resulting in 15 injuries and one fatality (23 injuries and three fatalities in 2009). None of the fatalities were students. School vans had 13 collisions resulting in one injury.⁶ Over 70% of these collisions occurred on urban streets and were most often caused by road conditions and driver distraction or inattention.

School divisions varied in the risks they faced and how they addressed them. Some school divisions own a bus fleet, others contract with private companies, and some use both approaches to meet their transportation needs. Some school divisions had policies about bus driver performance and some did not. Some transported preschoolers and others did not. Transporting students is complex.

4.0 LEGISLATION RELATED TO STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The Education Act, 1995 (Act) makes the Ministry responsible for overseeing school divisions, by working through the elected School Boards and appointed directors of

³ Saskatchewan Government Insurance safety statistics 2009. <http://www.sgi.sk.ca/individuals/safety/safetystats.html>

⁴ Ministry of Education. 2011-12 School Bus Survey.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Saskatchewan Government Insurance. 2010 Saskatchewan Traffic Safety Accident Facts. p. 43. http://www.sgi.sk.ca/pdf/tais/TAIS_2010_Annual_Report.pdf

education. The Act requires the Ministry to review and approve school divisions' objectives, programs, and estimated expenses (Act sections 3(1), 4(1)(h-1), 278). The Ministry is responsible for monitoring the objectives and costs for transporting students.

School Boards are responsible for administering and managing schools including student transportation (Act sections 85-86). School Boards assign responsibility to handle transportation and related risks to their administrators. However, School Boards remain accountable to supervise student transportation and monitor that school divisions comply with relevant laws (Act sections 134(2)(f) and 134.2(6)(f)).

The primary legislation governing student transportation includes the following:

- › *The Education Act, 1995* requires school divisions to:
 - implement policies governing school transportation including the use, operation and maintenance of vehicles, supervision of those who operate the vehicles, and the conduct of students (section 196(b))
 - comply with all legislation pertaining to vehicle inspection, maintenance, and the licensing of operators (sections 196(b and c) and 356)
 - provide any reports the Minister requires with respect to school transportation (section 197) and keep records of transportation costs, distance covered, etc. (section 370(1)(u))
- › *The Traffic Safety Act* requires school divisions to:
 - comply with requirements for national safety code certificates governing vehicle safety (sections 96 – 101)
 - maintain vehicles in a safe condition at all times, subject to inspection (section 250(2))
- › *The School Bus Operating Regulations, 1987* (under *The Traffic Safety Act*) directs drivers on the safe operation of a school bus including:
 - refraining from consuming alcohol eight hours prior to driving a bus
 - not leaving a bus that contains passengers
 - when to activate safety lights and how to approach a railroad crossing

5.0 AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND CRITERIA

The objective of this audit was to assess whether school divisions had effective processes to safely transport students during September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012. We also assessed the Ministry's related processes, where applicable. We focused on the school-arranged transportation of students to and from school and special events. Special events are defined as activities where the school arranges to transport students to an event as part of school activities (e.g., to another school for a unique class or learning opportunity).

We conducted this audit in six very different school divisions. **Exhibits 2 and 3** outline the location, transportation approaches, and key characteristics of these school divisions.



The six school divisions were:

- › Chinook School Division No. 211 (Chinook)
- › Good Spirit School Division No. 204 (Good Spirit)
- › Northwest School Division No. 203 (Northwest)
- › Prairie Valley School Division No. 208 (Prairie Valley)
- › Prince Albert Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 6 (Prince Albert)
- › St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 (St. Paul's)

We studied policies and procedures that influence safe student transportation and examined reports about how each school division transported students during our audit period. We observed practices in maintenance shops, examined vehicles, assessed drivers' files, and considered how documented complaints were resolved. In school divisions that contracted with private companies to provide student transportation, we examined how the school divisions monitored the contractors' performance. We also examined Ministry policies and relevant communications with school divisions.

To conduct this audit, we followed the *Standards for Assurance Engagements* published in the *CICA Handbook - Assurance*. To evaluate the processes used by the Ministry and school divisions to transport students safely, we used criteria based on the work of other auditors, related legislation, and regulations. The primary sources for the criteria in **Figure 1** are set out in Section 10.0. Ministry of Education management agreed with these criteria.

Figure 1—Audit Criteria for Transporting Students Safely

Effective processes to transport students safely include:

- 1. Communicate requirements to transport students safely**
 - 1.1. Establish requirements for transporting students
 - 1.2. Set delivery approach (e.g., contracting or directly managing vehicles)
 - 1.3. Align requirements with legislation and regulations
 - 1.4. Communicate all requirements for transporting students
- 2. Manage risks to student safety during transportation**
 - 2.1. Identify risks to student safety during routine and special events transportation
 - 2.2. Determine key risks to be reduced
 - 2.3. Implement cost effective strategies to reduce key risks
- 3. Monitor performance of student transportation**
 - 3.1. Set measureable performance targets
 - 3.2. Analyze performance trends (e.g., time on bus, safety targets, costs)
 - 3.3. Assess compliance with specific requirements
 - 3.4. Report performance (e.g., timely to School Board, annual to public)
- 4. Take action for transporting students safely**
 - 4.1. Investigate risks and complaints
 - 4.2. Resolve transportation issues promptly
 - 4.3. Inform School Board about unresolved safety issues

The Ministry and school divisions experienced major changes during the last decade. In 2006, 81 school divisions amalgamated into the present 28 school divisions. In 2009, the Government amended *The Education Act, 1995* and other legislation.

The legislation governing transportation also changed. The Government proclaimed *The Traffic Safety Act* in 2006, thus repealing *The Vehicle Services Act, 1986*. As explained later, when school divisions contracted with private companies for bus services in 2011-2012, the contracts did not reflect these legislative changes.

6.0 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

We found significant variation among the six school divisions where we conducted our audit. We observed best practices in several school divisions and set them out in **Exhibit 1**. However, neither school divisions nor the Ministry had a comprehensive understanding of the legislated requirements governing student transportation.

Overall, we found school divisions accept responsibility to keep students safe during transportation. In several situations, greater Ministry coordination would help to clarify the range of policies and approaches that are reasonable and affordable in Saskatchewan.

We concluded that, during September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012, the Ministry of Education did not effectively oversee school divisions' processes to safely transport students as it did not ensure school divisions complied with legislated requirements and it did not provide school divisions with guidance for managing key risks for safe student transportation.

We concluded that, in general, during September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012, the school divisions we audited had effective processes to safely transport students except for their processes to:

- › **Align transportation policies and practices with legislated requirements**
- › **Manage transportation safety risks related to driver performance (e.g., defensive driver training)**
- › **Monitor the performance of contracted transportation services**

7.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this Section, we describe our key findings and recommendations related to the audit criteria in **Figure 1**. These findings may help other school divisions in the province when self-assessing their own student transportation processes. We also audited Ministry policies and relevant communications with school divisions.

In Section 8.0, we also provide recommendations that are specific to the individual school divisions that we audited.



7.1 Ministry Needs to Highlight Requirements for Safe Student Transportation

Requirements for safely transporting students are set out in legislation as outlined in Section 3.0. The Ministry expects school divisions to align their transportation processes with requirements in legislation regardless of whether the school divisions operate their own fleet or contract with others. The Ministry does not communicate the legislated transportation requirements to school divisions, and does not monitor whether school divisions comply with legislation related to transporting students.

The Education Act, 1995 (section 196(b)) directs school divisions to implement policies governing school transportation in three areas: the operation and maintenance of vehicles, the supervision of drivers, and the conduct of students. One school division had policies in all three areas. Most school divisions had policies about vehicle safety and maintenance and student conduct. However, four school divisions did not have policies about driver supervision or performance appraisal. All school divisions had policies related to bus service cancellation (due to road conditions or lack of a qualified driver).

The Education Act, 1995 (section 356) requires school divisions to comply with relevant legislation. *The School Bus Operating Regulations, 1987* (Regulations) set out specific actions drivers must take to operate a school bus safely. A few school divisions did not annually communicate the appropriate Regulations to bus drivers (e.g., with driver handbook). Providing the Regulations to bus drivers at the beginning of each year would reinforce to bus drivers the actions required to operate the bus safely.

1. **We recommend that the Ministry of Education provide school boards with a summary of current legislation related to transporting students and request that each School Board review reports showing that its school division complies with legislated transportation requirements.**

7.2 School Divisions Not Managing All Transportation Risks

To transport students safely, we expected school divisions to identify and reduce risks in four areas—vehicle condition, driver competence, student behavior, and collisions. One school division had a formal process to identify and address all of these risks.

Other school divisions were taking varying actions to reduce these risks as set out in **Figure 2**. However, most school divisions did not have complete strategies to address risks for safely transporting students. School divisions that contracted all their transportation services did not monitor if contractors safely transported students (e.g., maintain buses, train drivers). Most school divisions did not ensure students had a visible reminder of how to behave while on the bus. As explained in Section 6.2.1, most school divisions did not adequately address risks related to drivers' performance.

Figure 2—Strategies to Address Risks to Safe Student Transportation

Risk Reduction Strategies	Prairie Valley Fleet	Good Spirit Fleet	Chinook Fleet	Chinook Contract * Monitoring	North west Fleet	Northwest Contract * Monitoring	Prince Albert Contract * Monitoring	St. Paul's Contract * Monitoring
Vehicles								
Annual Inspection	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Specific Routine Maintenance	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
Drivers								
Driver Appraisal Process	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Defensive Driving Course	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Students								
Rule of Conduct Visible in Bus	Y	Y	N	N	N Note 1	N Note 1	N	N
Student Behavior Guidelines	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Collisions								
Bus Evacuation Drills Documented	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Bus Cancellation Policy	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Source – Based on summer 2012 audit findings and confirmed with senior management in each school division.

Note 1 – Posting of rules of conduct is left to the discretion of the bus driver

Y – means school divisions use the risk reduction strategy listed to address risks

N – means school divisions do not have strategies to address this risk

* – For contracted bus services, N means the school division does not require reports on how contractors manage the identified risk.

7.2.1 Driver Performance Risks Not Well Addressed

The legislation governing school buses and their operation requires some driver risks to be addressed. For example, regulations require that drivers not drink alcohol within eight hours prior to driving a school bus and must notify the school divisions of any driving offenses. Some school divisions regularly evaluate if bus drivers' licenses are valid or restricted by driving offenses or collisions.

A skilled bus driver might be the most cost-effective strategy available to school divisions for safe transportation. Defensive driver training could also assist school divisions to recruit bus drivers who might be more confident with this training.

School divisions offer ad hoc training to bus drivers periodically which may include defensive driving. However, only one school division routinely provides defensive driver training to all drivers and observes driver competence during a formal ride-along program. This program gives the school division an opportunity to answer each driver's questions and to observe their driving performance. In general, school divisions did not sufficiently reduce driver-related risks to student safety. School divisions need to monitor bus driver performance diligently.

Bus drivers are required to check their bus for observable safety hazards daily (e.g., turn signals working). In addition, bus drivers are required to manage student behaviours and teach students how to conduct themselves on a school bus. For example, if a bus has a collision or slides off a road, promptly evacuating the bus in an orderly way can reduce



injuries. Most school divisions required drivers to have students practice evacuating the bus. Few school divisions required the bus driver to document when the drill occurred and describe the level of success. Written reports about challenges during evacuation drills could help school divisions assess risks and determine if further action is required.

In Section 8.0, we make recommendations to specific school divisions regarding driver risks.

7.2.2 Transportation Policies Inconsistent

As explained in Section 4.0, the Ministry is responsible for overseeing school divisions. School divisions are responsible for student transportation (*The Education Act, 1995*, sections 85-86). Each school division independently decides which risks to accept and which to reduce. As a result, students might be transported more safely in some school divisions than in others.

One risk that is handled differently across school divisions is the use of 15-passenger vans to transport students to special events or classes available only in specific locations (e.g., band, mechanics, science laboratory). The design of some 15-passenger vans could present a risk to student safety (e.g., roll-over risk associated with a high centre of gravity and/or excess weight at the back). School division decisions about the safety of 15-passenger vans are not consistent. As of August 2012, some school divisions do not use 15-passenger vans at all, some require specific driver training, and others provide only a brief orientation to van drivers. The Ministry approves budgets to purchase vehicles but has not assessed the risks associated with 15-passenger vans.

School divisions increasingly offer educational opportunities for pre-schoolers. Another risk that school divisions address differently is the transportation of very young children. Some school divisions transport pre-schoolers on school buses while others use vans, taxis, or reimburse parents for driving their young children to school. School buses are designed for older, larger children. If children have not reached a specific height and weight, school buses are unsafe unless the child is in a properly secured child safety seat. In 2012, the Ministry was in the process of assessing the risks associated with transporting pre-school children.

School divisions do not document the cost of alternative strategies when they select how to reduce risks to safe student transportation. School divisions did not know if other strategies might have been more cost-effective than the ones they selected.

The Ministry needs to know whether students are consistently transported safely and that school divisions use cost-effective strategies to reduce transportation risks. The Ministry uses a bus survey to collect certain information from school divisions to help allocate transportation funding. Some of this information could be analyzed for safety risks (e.g., age of bus fleet). In general, the Ministry does not request sufficient information from school divisions for it to assess if costs to manage transportation safety risks are reasonable and the strategies effective. For example, the Ministry does not request information about training provided to bus drivers.

2. We recommend that the Ministry of Education work with school divisions to identify key risks to safe student transportation and cost-effective options for managing those risks.

3. We recommend that the Ministry of Education require school divisions to report to their school boards the strategies they use to reduce risks related to vehicle condition, driver competence, student behavior, and collisions.

In special circumstances some students may require busing regardless of their distance from the school (e.g., students with disabilities, pickup in high traffic or high risk areas). The Ministry does not provide guidance about the distance students should walk before being transported to school. There is no provincial guidance about transportation in special circumstances or for children up to a specific age.

Each School Board makes policy decisions for its school division regarding the minimum distance requirements for transporting students. This results in inconsistent policies among school divisions. For example, in one city, the minimum busing distance is 0.8 kilometers for one school division and 0.6 kilometers in another school division serving the same area. Using different busing policies creates competition for enrollment among school divisions. Without Ministry guidance regarding the minimum distance for students to be transported to school, some school divisions' transportation of students might not be cost-effective. Some money intended for education might be used for transportation. If school divisions have special transportation needs, *The Education Act, 1995*, section 278 requires school divisions to inform the Ministry about them as part of their request for transportation funding.

4. We recommend that the Ministry of Education establish and provide guidance to school divisions about the distance for students to be transported to school including requesting school boards approve any exceptions to their school divisions' policies.

7.3 School Divisions Inconsistently Monitor Student Transportation

None of the school divisions that we audited had a policy directing what transportation information should be reported to the School Board. As a result, School Boards might not receive timely, sufficient, and relevant information. Information about transportation is essential to help School Boards assess whether the school divisions' transportation practices are safe.

Most school divisions gave their School Board a transportation report once each year. Sometimes these reports explained some ongoing risks as well as measures of



performance associated with transporting students (e.g., average age of the bus fleet, driver education, and kilometers driven for both vans and buses).

Without School Board policies, only a few School Boards received detailed, comprehensive reports, while others received very little beyond the basic information about the fleet. When school divisions contracted for all their transportation services, their School Boards received no written reports about transportation safety. Without this information, School Boards cannot carry out their legislated duties to supervise student transportation.

- 5. We recommend that the Ministry of Education work with school divisions to identify relevant student transportation performance information that should be reported to school boards quarterly and annually to help them supervise student transportation.**

7.3.1 Contracted Services Not Monitored

Different risks arise when school divisions choose to contract with others to provide transportation services. School divisions are responsible to determine the best approach to transport students to schools in their area. Some school divisions contract for all or part of their transportation services. Others choose to manage their own fleet. School divisions that contracted transportation services all had written, signed contracts. However, the contracts did not set out specific transportation safety expectations or reporting requirements and did not correctly identify the legislation relevant to the transportation of students. All of the contracts allowed school divisions to request reports from the contractor but only half of the school divisions we audited requested any specific reports. These contracts expected the contractors to provide the school divisions with bus routes, schedules, and to list the current fleet of vehicles (including year, make, and mileage).

When any service is contracted, it is important to monitor that the service is performed as expected. This requires clear expectations and regular monitoring. The contracts for school transportation services that we examined did not:

- » Describe how the school division expected the contractor to address key risks related to vehicle condition (e.g., age of fleet, nature and frequency of maintenance), drivers (e.g., license status, training, supervision), and collisions (e.g., timely bus evacuation drills)
- » Specifically require contractors to comply with *The School Bus Operating Regulations, 1987* and *The Traffic Safety Act*
- » Require contractors to report their compliance with key safety requirements

Without this information, the school divisions cannot determine if their students are being transported safely. Also, without complete information regarding how the contractor complies with legislated requirements, School Boards cannot carry out their legislated duty to supervise transportation services.

6. We recommend that the Ministry of Education require school divisions that contract transportation services to obtain written reports from contractors outlining how the contractor complies with legislated requirements for safe student transportation.

7.4 School Divisions Take Action to Improve Safety but Do Not Document Risks Resolved or Remaining

Complaints from parents, drivers, or the public help school divisions to monitor the safe transportation of students. All of the school divisions investigated complaints. Two school divisions had formal processes to track complaints—documented, standard format, dated, signed. The processes in the other school divisions were informal, and complaints were not documented.

Documenting complaints using a standard format to collect details improves completeness and accuracy and allows school divisions to demonstrate that they responded promptly to concerns. It also helps to document and monitor trends over time (e.g., common complaints). If complaints are not documented, the school division may be at risk of failing to investigate complaints, and could be accused of a lack of attention to student safety.

7. We recommend that the Ministry of Education provide guidance to school divisions for consistent, written, and timely processes to track and resolve complaints about safe student transportation.

Only a few school divisions regularly explained to their School Board the risks they still face regarding student transportation. Management seldom outlined whether it had concerns about the safety of some buses or bus routes, or the ability of the school division to keep pace with the transportation needs of a growing community.

8. We recommend that the Ministry of Education require school divisions to provide school boards and the Ministry with written reports about outstanding risks and unresolved complaints.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC SCHOOL DIVISIONS

The findings in Section 7.0 provide the basis for the following recommendations for the school divisions we audited. Some school divisions own a bus fleet, others contract with private companies, and some use both approaches to meet their transportation needs.



9. We recommend that Prairie Valley School Division No. 208 document student participation in timely bus evacuation drills and driver identified evacuation risks.

10. We recommend that Northwest School Division No. 203:

- › **Reference all relevant legislation within its busing contracts to align its transportation requirements with legislation and regulations**
- › **Provide school bus drivers annually with legislated requirements to transport students safely**

11. We recommend that Chinook School Division No. 211:

- › **Reference all relevant legislation within its busing contracts to align its transportation requirements with legislation and regulations**
- › **Define what is expected of contractors that provide student transportation services, including required reports**
- › **Implement a driver appraisal process**
- › **Document complaints about student transportation and how the complaints were resolved**

12. We recommend that Good Spirit School Division No. 204:

- › **Provide school bus drivers annually with legislated requirements to transport students safely**
- › **Implement a driver appraisal process**
- › **Document student participation in timely bus evacuation drills and driver identified evacuation risks**
- › **Document complaints about student transportation and how the complaints were resolved**

The following recommendations are for school divisions we audited that contract all transportation services to a private company. These school divisions do not effectively monitor the safety practices of their contractors.

13. We recommend that Prince Albert Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 6:

- › Reference all relevant legislation within its busing contracts to align its transportation requirements with legislation and regulations
- › Define expectations and reporting requirements with contractors
- › Implement processes to monitor its contractor's driver appraisal process
- › Implement processes to monitor its contractor's vehicle maintenance processes
- › Implement processes to monitor its contractor's bus evacuation processes
- › Periodically report to its board regarding the performance of student transportation
- › Document complaints about student transportation and how the complaints were resolved

14. We recommend that St. Paul's School Roman Catholic Separate Division No. 20:

- › Reference all relevant legislation within its busing contracts to align its transportation requirements with legislation and regulations
- › Define expectations and reporting requirements with contractors
- › Implement processes to monitor its contractor's driver appraisal process
- › Implement processes to monitor its contractor's vehicle maintenance processes
- › Implement processes to monitor its contractor's bus evacuation processes
- › Periodically report to its board regarding the performance of student transportation
- › Document complaints about student transportation and how the complaints were resolved



9.0 EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1—Best Practice Observed by Key Risk in 2012

Key Risk	Best Practices Observed
Driver Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require driver training for operation of 15-passenger vans. During annual driver meetings, provide defensive driving and first aid training and discuss safety including legislated safety requirements. Review driver abstracts annually and summarize findings and actions taken. Monitor status of drivers' licenses monthly using Saskatchewan Government Insurance intranet. Periodically evaluate the safety of drivers and routes (e.g., ride along program). Make complaint forms available to the public.
Student Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety awareness newsletter or brochure to parents early in the school year. Use a bus safety awareness program/video for elementary students. Post student conduct rules visibly on all school buses.
Vehicle Maintenance / Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require school bus maintenance every 5,000 to 6,000 km and monitor its timely completion. Use standard inspection checklists when maintaining buses (e.g., check brakes, windshield wipers, fluid levels, turn signals). Monitor expiry dates for required annual SGI school bus inspections. Employ certified journeyman technicians in the bus garage.
Collisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require drivers to have cell phones in event of trouble with vehicle or road. Use standardized forms to document all collisions involving buses, regardless of how minor the collision. Develop bus cancellation criteria for use during severe weather, including methods of communicating cancellations to the public (e.g., local radio stations, automated callback system). Require drivers to conduct and document evacuation drills with students at least twice per year.

Source: Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan. Summer 2012.

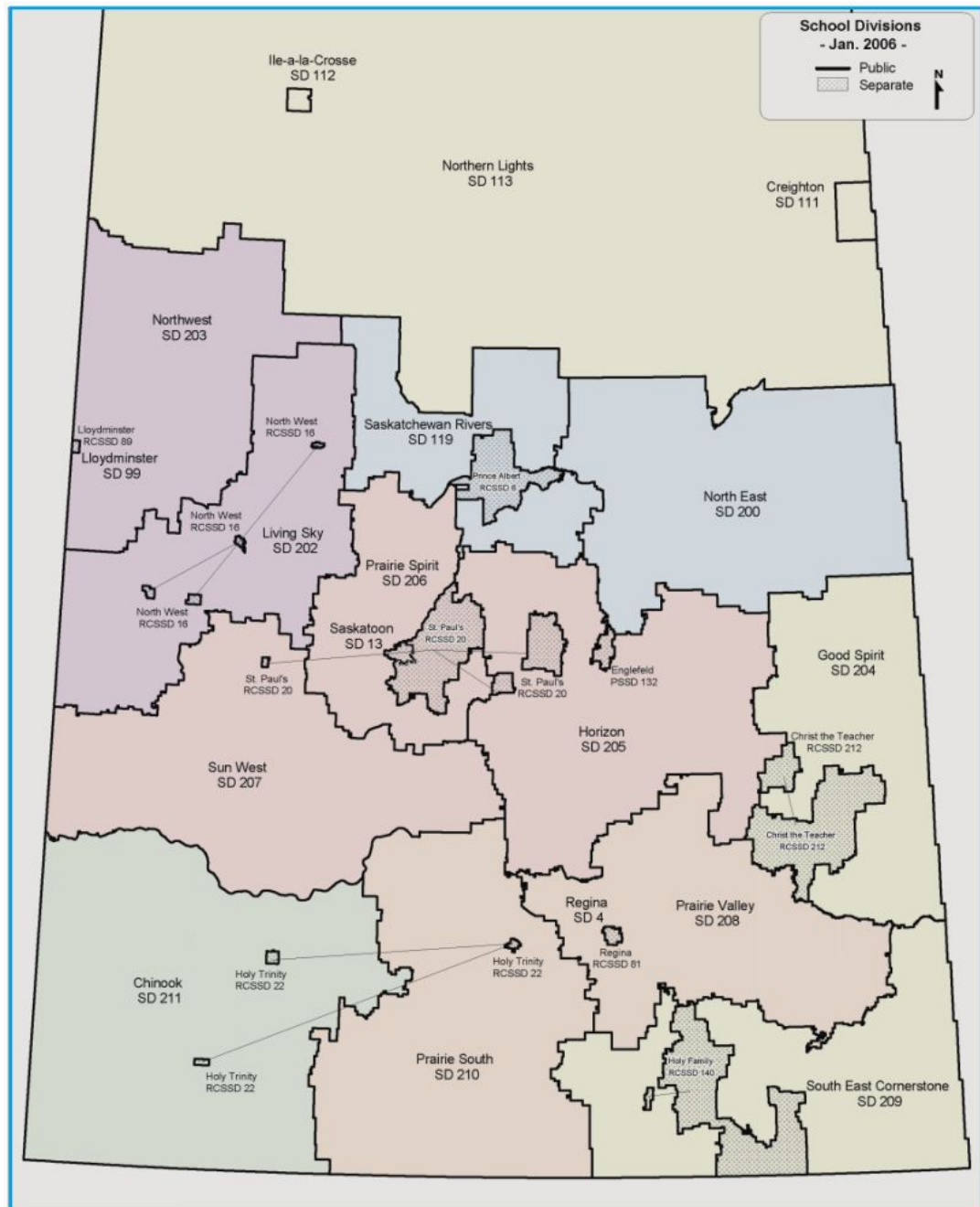
We observed the above best practices in transporting students safely during our audit of six school divisions in 2012. Other school divisions could also have important practices to share.

Exhibit 2—Key Characteristics of Audited School Divisions in 2012

School Division	Chinook	Good Spirit	Northwest	Prairie Valley	Prince Albert	St Paul's
Location	SW	SE	NW	Central SE	Central N	Central
Total Enrolment	6,000	6,000	5,000	8,000	3,000	15,000
Transportation Expense as % of Total Expense	11%	9%	10%	9%	6%	3%
Own Fleet /Contracted	Contract and Own Fleet	Own Fleet	Contract and Own Fleet	Own Fleet	Contract	Contract

Source: The Ministry of Education and school divisions' 2010-11 records.

Exhibit 3—Saskatchewan School Division Boundaries



Source: Saskatchewan School Boards Association (School Divisions Map).
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/index.php?id=school-divisions-divisions-map>



10.0 SELECTED REFERENCES

- Australia. Victorian Auditor General. (2008). *School bus safety review*.
www.audit.vic.gov.au/files/20110504-Student-Safety.pdf
- Canada. Government of Alberta. (2008). *15 Passenger Van Use Information for Albertans*.
www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType41/production/15passengervan.pdf
- Canada. Transport Canada. (2010). *Optimizing child protection*. www.tc.gc.ca/eng/roadsafety/tp-tp2436-rs200407-menu-130.htm
- Newfoundland. Auditor General. (2009). Chapter 2, Part 2.11, Department of Government Services: School bus safety. In *Report of the Auditor General of Newfoundland and Labrador, January 2009*.
www.ag.gov.nl.ca/ag/annualReports/2008AnnualReport/Chapter2.11.pdf
- Nova Scotia. Auditor General. (2008). Chapter 2 Education: South Shore Regional School Board [including bus transportation]. In *Report of the Auditor General, February 2008*. www.oag-nb.ca/feb2008/ch2.pdf
- Quebec. Auditor General. (2010-11). Chapter 4, School transportation. In *Report of the Auditor General, 2010-2011*. www.vgq.qc.ca/en/en_publications/en_rapport