

# Year in Review

## SBO's TOP 2020



## Accomplishments for SBO Members

School Bus Ontario (SBO) is proud of its accomplishments in the last year – its first year of existence, much has been achieved:

- Advocated for operator members to secure COVID-19 funding to prepare for the 2020/21 school year
- Secured \$110 Million in funding for the following eligible expenses:
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for school bus drivers which included cleaning solution, masks, visors and gloves
  - Assist operators to pay drivers for the extra time involved in cleaning/sanitizing buses twice a day;
  - Noon-hour pick-ups
  - A renewed Driver Retention Program (Pay Periods 6, 7);

Without the advocacy of SBO, the \$110 in funding would not have occurred. Further SBO met with over 20 PC MPP's between July and December, including two face to face meetings with Education Minister Stephen Lecce. SBO has further secured open communication and weekly dialogue with Minister Lecce's political staff and ministry officials. These types of relationships are crucial to SBO and helps to create awareness of our issues going forward.

In fall 2020, SBO also ran a series of digital ads on Facebook, Twitter to highlight the importance of school buses in the re-opening of the economy. The ads drove home the message that if kids can't get to school, parents can't get to their jobs. These ads reached thousands of people across the province and a written and digital newsletter was sent to all MPP's at Queen's Park to remind them of the importance of the student transportation industry in the economic re-start of Ontario.

### Other successes include:

- Over thirty media interviews in the fall of 2020 to discuss cleaning/sanitizing buses and COVID-19 protocols (newspapers, digital, TV and radio)
- Weekly webinars between mid-August and October with members to discuss funding issues, COVID-19 protocols and HR issues
- Advisory role to Transport Canada for Safety on school buses/ D-250 committee on safety
- School Bus Safety Week photo op/meeting with Education Minister Stephen Lecce and other MPPs
- School bus driver profiles on Twitter and Facebook to thank our exceptional drivers during safety week

**STAG:** A Student Transportation Advisory Committee (STAG) has also occupied a lot of time and effort on behalf of SBO. This committee's work is on-going as the Ministry studies the student transportation sector on funding, procurement and cost modeling. This extensive study is wrapping up this spring and SBO is advocating for our members with written submissions and on-going conference calls with the Ministry and other stakeholders.

### Additional COVID-19 Successes:

- **Navigating DriveTest Closures:** When the COVID-19 pandemic closed DriveTest centres, SBO advocated on behalf of the school bus industry to limit the impacts to prospective school bus drivers. SBO worked to secure alternate training and licencing upgrade mechanisms through the Driver Certification Program, as well as ensured school bus drivers received priority support during DriveTest's phased in re-opening.
- **COVID-19 Licencing Extensions:** As the provincial government suspended the expiry of various products (licences, plates, etc.), SBO undertook a communication campaign, including numerous webinars and newsletters, to ensure members were informed of this would impact their businesses.

**Criminal Background Check Service:** SBO maintained support of its on-line Criminal Background Check Service for Class B and E driver licences as an alternative to obtaining in-person checks, a program of critical importance when in-person services were limited during the pandemic.

**Vulnerable Sector Search:** When it was time to get all newly trained school bus a required VSS, the province's backlog hindered our ability to get drivers on the road. SBO advocated with the Solicitor General's senior political staff and the OPP to create a system that expedited the VSS for school bus drivers.

**Driver Licencing Upgrades and Renewals:** SBO assisted members in navigating various complex steps needed to upgrade and renew school bus drivers' licences. When members encounter issues with medicals, background checks, DriveTest and/or the Driver Certification Program (DCP), SBO is there to help identify solutions and get drivers on the road.

**Transport Canada Task Force on School Bus Safety:** SBO continues to be an active member in the Transport Canada Task Force on School Bus Safety. SBO's input and feedback helps ensure members have a voice as the Task Force examines the future of school bus safety in Canada.

**Federal School Bus Manufacturing Standards:** SBO continues keep members up to date on various school bus manufacturing standards. When the concept of using driver barriers in school buses was introduced, SBO played a significant role in the development of the federal guidance on this issue.

**Heavy Vehicle Emission Testing Changes:** SBO continues to participate in consultation sessions regarding changes to the emission testing programs for heavy vehicles. SBO's participation ensures members are prepared for the updates and have a voice in guiding the government's updates to emission testing regime.

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