

**SCHOOLBUS**ONTARIO



**MEMBERSHIP  
PACKAGE**

20

24

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I hope you and your family had a great holiday break in December and are well-rested for the new year! 2023 came with many challenges in the industry but many successes as well. School Bus Ontario advocates for you tremendously and at every opportunity. This year-end newsletter will hopefully help you better understand the scope of work that is embarked upon each day by your SBO team. This will be a newsletter with lots of stats and figures and a few in-depth articles to help you understand the complexities of our work in advocating for you.

You will see that SBO has had unprecedented access to the Minister's Office in recent years – in fact, never before has the school bus industry been able to put forth its issues directly to the decision-makers as it has since SBO was created. This past year alone, our Executive Director, Nancy Daigneault, former President Rob Murphy, Vice President Kevin Langs and I met with Education Minister Stephen Lecce's office over 25 times including a face-to-face with the Minister at his Queen's Park office. For one stakeholder to get that much access demonstrates that SBO is held in high regard by the Minister and his staff.

For 2024, we are concentrating on ensuring the issues stemming from the new funding formula, announced last spring, are fixed so that we can begin to plan for the future of our industry. The pegged fuel rate, the new Retention and Recruitment Bonus (R&R) and minivan issues are top priority for us and the majority of our meetings in 2023 focused on finding solutions. It is our hope and expectation that announcements will be forthcoming soon on these very important issues.

Nick McRae, SBO President

# SBO BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Nick McRae,  
President



Kevin Langs,  
Vice-President



Rob Murphy,  
Past President



Nancy Daigneault,  
Executive Director

Sherry Barker,  
Director

Brian Denny,  
Director

Greg Hammond,  
Director

Mark Hannah,  
Director

Eric Hochgeschurz,  
Director

Chris Harwood,  
Director

Troy Phinney,  
Director

Theresa Matthews,  
Director

Jarrod DeNure,  
Director

Chuck Sandrelli,  
Director

# SBO & DRP LEGAL TEAM



Lynne Golding,  
Partner  
Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP



Sophie MacRae,  
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# MEET THE SBO TEAM



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# SBO ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2020 - PRESENT

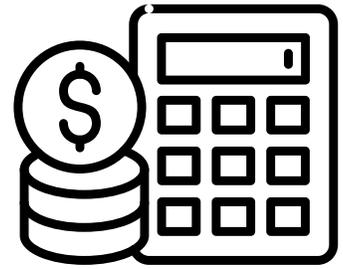


- ✓ Secured \$110 million in COVID-19 funding for student transportation.
- ✓ Secured PPE for school bus drivers.
- ✓ Secured cleaning supplies to clean buses and pay drivers to ensure daily sanitizing during COVID.
- ✓ 2020: SBO met with 20 Conservative Party MPPs to ensure the \$110 million in funding.
- ✓ Media interviews by Executive Director Nancy Daigneault at school start every year to inform/educate parents on school bus safety and busing issues.
- ✓ 2020 DRP, which was scheduled to be scrapped.
- ✓ 2021/2022 DRP, which was scheduled to be scrapped.
- ✓ 2022/2023 DRP, which was scheduled to be scrapped.
- ✓ Ensured school bus drivers received COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as teachers.
- ✓ 8 lamp amber-red system – SBO worked with MPP Mike Harris Jr. to create a private members bill for the new amber-red light system.
- ✓ Held three news conferences with Education Minister Lecce on various issues, solidifying our relationship.
- ✓ SBO worked with House Leader MPP Paul Calandra to schedule 8-lamp Amber Red bill for passage of private members bill (very few private member bills get fully passed).
- ✓ News conferences with MPP Harris to announce new 8-lamp system.
- ✓ Secured funding through the Ministry of Education to reimburse operators for the installation of the new amber-red system.
- ✓ DRP is scheduled to be scrapped after 2023 but SBO negotiated with the Minister's office to secure an R&R bonus replacement as part of the GSN.
- ✓ Upon realizing the R&R did not include payroll taxes, SBO worked with the Minister's office to secure payroll taxes.
- ✓ Working with the ministry on new funding formula issues.



*MPP Mike Harris Jr., Executive Director Nancy Daigneault and former SBO President Rob Murphy announcing 8 lamp amber red system.*

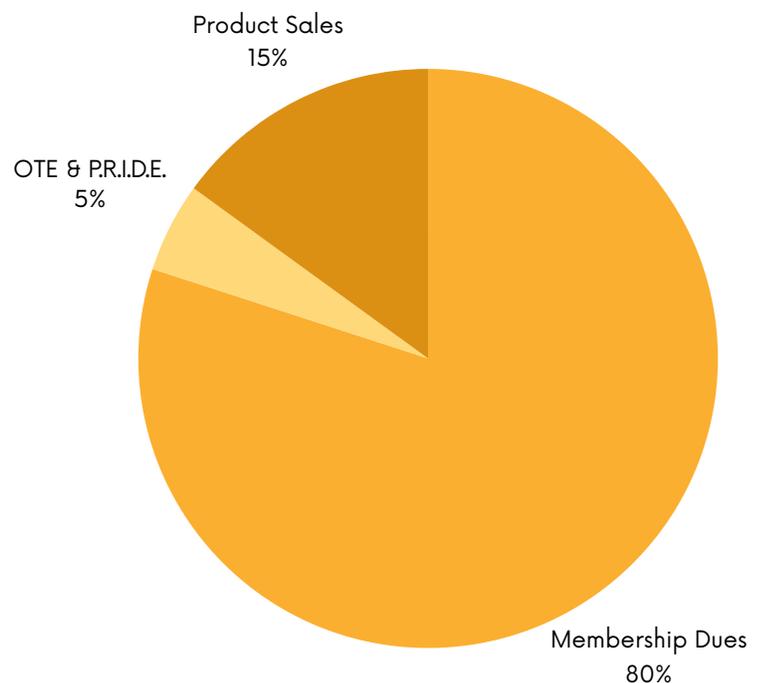
# SBO FINANCES AT A GLANCE



School Bus Ontario's finances continue to be healthy and each year we are able to balance our budget and meet all fiscal targets. Over the course of the next three years, the budget committee and board are recommending that membership dues increase marginally to cope with inflationary pressures and the ongoing consolidations within the industry.

This year membership dues are increasing by two percent and we are projecting increases of three and four percent in the next two years. These increases help us with:

- Government Relations and on-going lobbying work to put forth our position at Queen's Park;
- Work on the D-250 committee federally;
- Continue to run the P.R.I.D.E program;
- Work on the Ontario Transportation Expo;
- Troubleshoot regulatory issues for you with licensing & and background checks;
- Work on wrapping up the former DRP / work with the Ministry on the transition to the new Driver Recruitment and Retention payment.

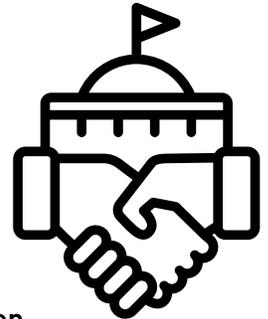


Our base operating budget exceeds \$500,000 each year and we rely on these membership dues to continue the good work we do for you.

If you have any questions about our finances or any issues, do not hesitate to contact us.

# THE ABC'S OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Getting governments to act on a policy issue can be a herculean task – it involves careful planning and strategy to ensure an issue gets pushed through the various levels of bureaucracy and government committees before anything can be changed or new policy is announced.



The 'A' in government relations is: **Always** ensure your policy aligns with government policy!

The 'B' in government relations: **Be aware** of the numerous steps that must be taken within government before a policy is announced/changed.

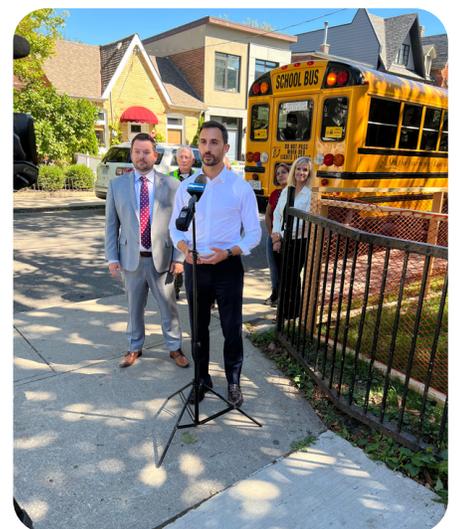
The 'C' in government relations is: **Careful planning** – all governments carefully plan when their new policies are announced and your industry may want something quickly but calendars, schedules and priorities of other ministries and announcements may hinder the final announcement.

**A**

**Align Policy:** While having a relationship with bureaucrats is key, the Ministers and MPPs drive change and a true strategy involves elected officials. Gain access to decision makers – the Ministers, the MPPs and ministry officials. They are the ones who need to determine if a policy change, proposal or new law fits within their strategic vision politically. If the policy doesn't align with the government's overall political direction, lobbying will be that much more difficult and the proposal will need to be tweaked to align with the political vision of the current government. This is why School Bus Ontario (SBO) is always asking our members to reach out to their local MPP to help them advocate for change. The more MPPs who are aware of our issues – the better.

**B**

**Be aware:** Policy change takes time! Once a Minister hears from MPP's and others and accepts the idea of the policy proposal, then he/she must put together a business case for cabinet for approval. This business case may also have to gain approval from Treasury board first, especially if it involves new or reallocating funding, before going to full cabinet. All of this takes months as the Ministry needs to analyze new or tweaked policies for legalities and other issues and a communications plan needs to be formulated. Once all of this is put together and the Minister is pleased with the proposal, it then goes to full cabinet for approval. If approved, the policy will then need to be vetted through the Premier's office and cabinet office for announcement dates or bill introduction dates.



*Education Minister, Stephen Lecce, MPP, Mike Harris Jr. announce the new 8-lamp amber red lights.*

# THE ABC'S OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS CONTINUED

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**C**

Careful planning is key! If a new bill needs to be introduced, it will be internally determined when the bill will be tabled, and a full communications plan will accompany it. The scheduling of the date for the introduction of a bill takes time and obviously only happens when the house is sitting. After being introduced, it must go to committee and three readings before even being passed. Royal assent and date of proclamation is the final step. Careful planning is paramount because if your policy requires lots of steps you need to lobby well in advance – never expect one or two meetings will be all that is needed – sometimes it takes repeated meetings to effect change.

## IMPORTANT NOTES:

When it comes to a small policy change or new regulation, cabinet approval is all that is needed but a regulatory change or new regulation still needs to be posted appropriately to notify stakeholders of any changes and full communications plan created. Cabinet committee schedules, full cabinet schedules and the sitting days of the full legislature all need to be taken into account as well.



*Former Transportation Minister Caroline Mulrone,  
Past President Rob Murphy and Executive Director  
Nancy Daigneault at OTE.*

## FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS:

There are generally two windows of opportunity for getting new funding in the calendar year: the unveiling of a new budget in the spring or during the fall economic statement in October/ November each year. Lobbying for funds should begin at a minimum of a full 9 months before these two windows. All funding, of course, needs Treasury Board approval, full Cabinet approval and Caucus support.



# DID YOU KNOW?

## 2023 SCHOOL BUS ONTARIO ADVOCATED FOR YOU

- ✓ TWENTY-ONE FACE-TO-FACE CALLS WITH MINISTER LECCE'S CHIEF OF STAFF ON FUNDING FORMULA ISSUES
- ✓ ONE FACE-TO-FACE MEETING IN PERSON WITH MINISTER LECCE IN FALL 2023 TO DISCUSS THE FUEL PEG ISSUE, MINIVANS AND THE R&R ISSUE
- ✓ A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING WITH NEW DEPUTY MINISTER KATE MANSON-SMITH
- ✓ SIX FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH THE SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICIAL WHO PUT TOGETHER NEW FUNDING FORMULA
- ✓ FIVE FACE-TO-FACE MPP MEETINGS TO RAISE ISSUES ABOUT THE FUNDING FORMULA
- ✓ TESTIFIED AT THE ALL-PARTY COMMITTEE THAT STUDIED BILL 98, THE BETTER SCHOOLS AND STUDENT OUTCOMES ACT (REQUIRING MORE TRANSPARENCY IN FUNDING SENT TO SCHOOL BOARDS)
- ✓ THREE GROUP CALLS WITH THE MINISTRY ON FUNDING FORMULA ISSUES
- ✓ TWO CALLS WITH OASBO ON FUNDING FORMULA VIA TEAMS
- ✓ THREE FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH THE LABOUR MINISTER'S OFFICE
- ✓ TWO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH THE TRANSPORTATION MINISTER'S OFFICE

These meetings with senior officials within the ministry and minister's office demonstrate that our relationship with the government is stronger than ever. Our efforts to move forward with positive reforms to the funding formula remain our current priority.

# SBO

# MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



- ★ **Webinars** – Conducted several times per year to assist in educating and informing members on timely and pertinent safety, regulatory and industry issues and initiatives. These webinars offer learning opportunities to all staff from the comfort and convenience of any location - workplaces, boardrooms, training rooms, home offices.
- ★ **Website** – Login ability to gain insight into important industry and member information.
- ★ **Newsletter and Eblasts** – Regular image-building opportunities in the electronic newsletter providing the industry's latest issues and trends impacting daily business in the student transportation industry.
- ★ **Membership Directory** – Exposure in a powerful resource that lists key industry decision-makers and contact information across the province.
- ★ **Regulatory Advocacy and Issue Management** - The Safety and Legislation Team (Alex Bugeya and Robert Monster) continually represents its members' interests and successfully advises the government regarding many issues affecting the student transportation industry.
- ★ **Government Advocacy and Partnerships** - Ongoing advocacy on behalf of all members with one strong, collective, professional voice. Highly respected and called upon by the government for industry advice, the Association supports all members in a proficient manner with the Ministries of Education, Transportation, Government Services, and numerous other provincial and federal bodies. Advocacy efforts focus on accomplishing student transportation funding sustainability; proficient and transparent competitive procurement practices; overall changes to student transportation governance and administration; industry cost-saving opportunities and standardized requirements for service levels; and long-term, sustainable solutions that will address school bus driver wages, recruitment and retention.
- ★ **Professional Instructor in Driver Education (P.R.I.D.E.) Program** – This one-of-a-kind program teaches fleet driver instructors how to properly train new and seasoned drivers. Members receive a discounted rate for any participants they send to the training program.
- ★ **Ontario Transportation Expo (OTE)** - The largest busing show in Canada, this conference and trade show is a joint event organized by three partnering associations – School Bus Ontario (SBO), the Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA), and the Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA). A unique opportunity for bus operators and industry suppliers to get together and explore ways to grow and improve the busing industry.
- ★ **SBO Publications** – Members receive a discounted rate for publication orders (e.g. log books, hours of service books, PMVI Inspection Reports, and Proof of Brake Inspection Forms.)

# SAFETY & LEGISLATION

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SBO's Safety and Legislation team has assisted about **719** drivers across our member companies with licencing issues in 2023.

Some other items of note that we've assisted with:

- Follow up to the Heavy Commercial Vehicle Deferred Payment Plan (HCVDPP)
- Assisting with the transition to the online air brake learning module
- Assisting with the ELD mandate coming into force on July 1st for non-school buses in Ontario
- Continuing to manage the SBO Online Background Check Service
- Work with CSA D250 Committee and Transport Canada's School Bus Safety Task Force to promote a balanced approach to safety standards that take into account the efficiency and reliability of vehicle functions.
- Participate in the planning and execution of the OTE conference and trade show.
- **6,121** background checks were initiated in 2023 through MyBackCheck.

If you have any Safety and Legislative questions or any issues, do not hesitate to contact Alex Bugeya at [abugeya@schoolbusontario.ca](mailto:abugeya@schoolbusontario.ca) or Robert Monster at [robertmonster@schoolbusontario.ca](mailto:robertmonster@schoolbusontario.ca).



# PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTOR IN DRIVER EDUCATION (P.R.I.D.E.) PROGRAM

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The Professional Instructor in Driver Education (P.R.I.D.E.) Program is a joint venture of the Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA), Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA) and School Bus Ontario (SBO). This one-of-a-kind program teaches fleet driver instructors how to properly train new and seasoned drivers. If a passing grade is achieved, a certificate is issued, thus providing one of the prerequisites for "Signing Authority" under the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's "Driver Certification Program".



## 2023 P.R.I.D.E. Program Update

2023 has brought a lot of positive changes to the program. The P.R.I.D.E. Program is now teaching its newly updated and improved curriculum and has added an additional day to the course to meet all of the new MTO requirements. We have received extremely positive feedback from the participants who have attended the new program since the rollout.

In 2023 we successfully hired and onboarded seven new master trainers to bring our team to ten. Our master trainer team includes; Adam Arbour - Niagara Transit, Kathie Heyworth - Guelph Transit, Joel Bailey - OC Transpo, Jane Black - G & L Stevenson Transport Ltd., Nicky Cheung - York Transit, Frank Chu - Metrolinx, Amanda Hearn - Student Transportation of Canada, David Sodaro - Guelph Transit, and Karen Wilk - Student Transportation of Canada. All of the new hires have completed their probationary periods and are now fully trained master trainers.

In 2023, we have successfully completed ten full programs. We have also run six successful Recertification programs. In 2023, for the first time, we tested out the full-week program over the course of two extended weekends. We received positive feedback from attendees and bus operators. We are excited to be able to offer more weekend programs in 2024 to offer a variety to our members.

We are very excited about all of the updates and improvements that have been made to the program and are excited to see where the program is headed in the future. We are extremely grateful to all of our operator members who have supported the P.R.I.D.E. Program over the last 30+ years and we are thrilled to be able to continue serving you.



# PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTOR IN DRIVER EDUCATION (P.R.I.D.E.) PROGRAM

## What You Will Receive Attending the Program:



- A dual learning environment that is 50% in-classroom and 50% on-road.
- Certification for "Signing Authority" with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation in order to upgrade and renew driver's licenses on your own premises (if a passing grade is achieved and all other MTO requirements are met).
- Indispensable techniques for classroom instruction including the effective use of audio-visual equipment, non-lecture format and more!
- Superior facilitation skills including climate setting, guided questioning, being an active listener, and giving positive feedback both in the classroom and on board the vehicle.
- Valuable in-vehicle information on "HOW" to properly teach pre-trip inspections, defensive driving, right and left turns, road tests and more.
- One-on-one interaction with master instructors and many opportunities to exchange information among participants.

## Quick Facts:

- 320+ participants attended the program since 2020 and have gained their Signing Authority.
- 280+ Signing Authorities have attended the Recertification Program since 2020 and maintained their Signing Authority status.
- Added seven new trainers to our training team.
- Discounted registration fee is provided for members.
- Additional programs have been added in 2024 to meet industry demand.

For questions or more information, please contact Katie Kersten at [kkeyworth@schoolbusontario.ca](mailto:kkeyworth@schoolbusontario.ca)



# ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION EXPO (OTE)



## WHAT IS OTE ALL ABOUT?

The largest busing show in Canada, this conference and trade show is a joint event organized by three partnering associations – School Bus Ontario (SBO), the Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA), and the Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA). It was conceived as a unique opportunity for bus operators and industry suppliers to get together and explore ways to grow and improve the busing industry.

## WHO WILL BE THERE?

This event is a combination of buyers and sellers from the entire bus transportation industry, not found anywhere else in Canada. Participants come mostly from the province of Ontario, but many are also from neighbouring provinces, northern USA and from various locations across North America.

1. School bus and Motor Coach owners, operators and staff
2. Public transit managers and their employees
3. Employees from community transportation companies
4. Manufacturers, suppliers, consultants and providers of bus products, vehicles, parts and services
5. A variety of other industry-related individuals and companies
6. Government officials and decision-makers

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ATTENDING?

1. This joint industry trade show and conference provides access to people in the bus industry that matter. And they're ready to talk one-on-one.
2. Solutions, services and products that can improve competitiveness, customer service and your bottom line.
3. Owners, managers and industry leaders can explore maintenance, operations and business issues during interactive conference sessions.
4. Exhibitors can display their services and products in a professional trade show environment that combines both vehicle and booth displays.
5. Opportunities for maintenance and operations staff to trouble-shoot, brainstorm and network with colleagues and suppliers alike.
6. A chance to learn from relevant industry manufacturers in face-to-face technical business sessions.
7. Deals and purchases can be made in the comfort of a specific bus industry environment.
8. Networking possibilities abound! Take advantage of this unique, affordable and diverse opportunity!

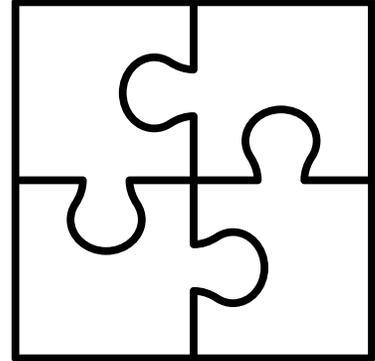


# KEEP IN THE KNOW!

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## Consolidation in Industry

The industry in Ontario is changing and can help us create a stronger association with a more amplified voice in the transportation sector. As a result of the consolidation, attracting members is critical and we thank you for your support in this regard. Our membership dues are increasing this year and there is a plan in place to increase them marginally in the future – well under the rate of inflation. The dues help us gain access to the decision makers and advocate for change so if you know someone who could benefit from being an SBO member, please pass this newsletter along to them. The more members, the stronger we become.



## New SBO Golf Tournament

In an effort to continue to help you with your businesses, we are planning an end-of-school-year golf tournament this year. This will give us all a chance to meet, mingle and discuss issues of importance to you to make this association stronger. **THE LAST WEEK OF JUNE – DATE AND LOCATION** to be announced soon.

# CONTACT SBO



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