

SCHOOLBUSONTARIO



**MEMBERSHIP
PACKAGE**

20

25

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As I reflect on the past two years serving as your President, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to lead such a dynamic and committed group of individuals. For me, this has been both a challenging and rewarding journey. School Bus Ontario (SBO) plays a key role in advocating for the industry – we work hard with the Education Minister's office, the Ministry of Transportation and other stakeholders to help you run your businesses every day.

Under my leadership, we've amplified our voice and even launched an advocacy campaign online to pressure the Education Minister to fix the funding formula, which directly impacts many of our members. While the progress on this issue has been slow, we have managed to push the issue forward within the government, and we have been at the forefront of policy discussions on this very important matter.

The association's financial stability since its inception five years ago has been one of our major successes. However, recent consolidations within the industry have exerted new pressures on our operational costs. To continue providing the high-quality services, advocacy and educational resources you expect, we're having to make some difficult financial decisions.

After careful consideration, we've decided that an increase in membership dues is required. **The Base rate will increase from \$321 to \$500 starting this year. The per route rate is further increasing 4%; the maximum rate, for the large operators, is also increasing by \$2,000.** This adjustment is absolutely vital to maintain our financial health and to support our ongoing future initiatives. In order to streamline our operations, we have embarked on a cost-cutting exercise and are reducing expenses in a number of areas including contracting services. We know increasing rates isn't an easy message to hear but rest assured the long-term benefits and sustainability of our association is critically important. Without SBO advocating for you at Queen's Park, our message wouldn't be heard, and policy changes would go forward without any input.

Moving forward, we remain committed to transparency and creating a dynamic and strong association. We will strive to enhance the value you receive and ensure every dollar contributes to our advancement. My two-year term will come to an end this spring, and I want to thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to the student transportation sector. I also want to extend a thank you to my Vice President, Kevin Langs and the whole board of directors who have supported me and helped me navigate my term as President.

Nick McRae, SBO President

SBO BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Nick McRae,
President



Kevin Langs,
Vice-President



Rob Murphy,
Past President



Nancy Daigneault,
Executive Director

Brian Denny,
Director

Greg Hammond,
Director

Mark Hannah,
Director

Eric Hochgeschurz,
Director

Chris Harwood,
Director

James Jesty,
Director

Troy Phinney,
Director

Theresa Matthews,
Director

Jarrod DeNure,
Director

Chuck Sandrelli,
Director

SBO & DRP LEGAL TEAM



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Partner
Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP



Sophie MacRae,
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2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

ADVOCACY AND POLICY IMPACT

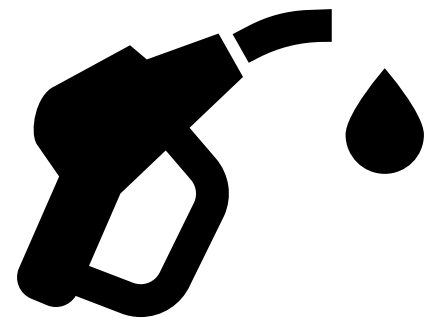
As we close the curtains on 2024, we reflect on a year filled with challenges, achievements, and progress within the Ontario school bus industry. Here's a look back at some of the highlights of the year as we worked together to create a safe, sustainable student transportation system in Ontario. Our collective efforts in advocacy led to several successes in the last year:

RENFREW

The 2024 school year began without school buses in Renfrew County – an expired contract and no negotiations with the consortia, operators couldn't run their school buses, impacting 10,000 students and families. A huge effort on behalf of the operators, with support from School Bus Ontario, helped them secure a new five-year contract and restore bus service to impacted families. MPPs were engaged by the local community to press Queen's Park to release additional funds to the school board and, after significant media attention and pressure, additional money was released by the Ministry of Education which ended the impasse six weeks after it began. SBO played a strong role in helping to create the strategy to help the local operators and offered assistance in securing the contract by engaging the Minister's office to ensure additional funds flowed to the school board and local consortia.

FUEL

When the province changed the fuel peg price to \$1.50 in the spring of 2023 operators in six regions (Chatham-Kent, Peel Region, Northwestern, Trillium-Lakeland, Nipissing, STSCO) faced significant cuts in fuel payments due to the structure of their contracts. By June 2024, after significant lobbying by School Bus Ontario (SBO,) fuel payments were restored to several regions for the 2023/24 school year - which was only a partial victory as operators still faced fuel cuts in the remaining years of their contracts. The problem wasn't solved for long-term contracts and some regions weren't given additional funds from the province to rectify the issue.



Two cabinet shuffles then stymied SBO's efforts on the fuel front as we were forced to patiently await new Ministers to get sworn in and briefed on the issue. The new Education Minister, Jill Dunlop met with SBO within two weeks of being named to the education portfolio in fall 2024. Since then, there have been numerous meetings and discussions, with documents exchanged as the Minister's office and SBO try to settle the issue. As of January 2024, there has not been a settlement, but we are cautiously optimistic that a solution will be found.

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW ADVOCACY AND POLICY IMPACT CONTINUED

LEFT STRANDED

The Left Stranded campaign by SBO helped to push the Education Minister to want to move to rectify the lack of buses in Renfrew County and the fuel peg issue. www.leftstranded.ca garnered significant media attention and encouraged school bus drivers, parents and other concerned citizens to write to their MPPs to demand that more funding be released to affected regions.

Over 14,500 letters to MPPs were signed and sent to Queen's Park as a result of the campaign – a significant achievement.

Significant media attention at the beginning of the school year helped amplify the left-stranded campaign – our message was picked up across the province, with both small and large media outlets.

Many of the videos and graphic arts for the project were made available in the members-only section of the website and remain there. Please go to the LOGIN page to access the assets should you still want to share them on your social channels.



⬆️ up to 100% increase

Several bus providers have recently been notified by the province about substantial increases in their monthly parking space rental costs. The new rates are considerably higher, with some providers experiencing **hikes of up to 100%**.

⬆️ 60% increase

Average bus cost in 2018:
\$103,000
Average bus cost in 2023:
\$140,000
Average bus cost in 2024:
\$165,000

⬆️ 30% increase

Average maintenance cost increase (since 2018)

⬆️ 100% increase

Tire cost increase: \$750/tire to \$1,500/tire in some cases

⬆️ 30% increase

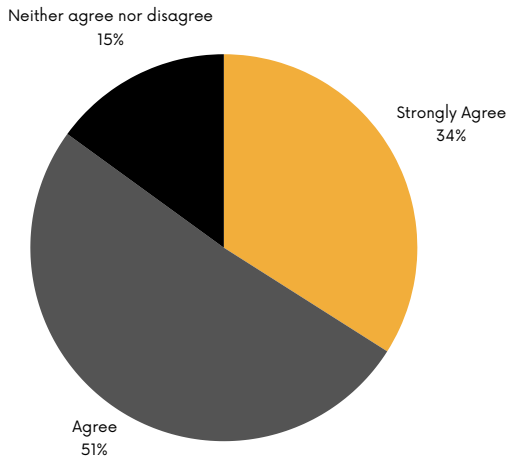
Average insurance cost increase (since 2018)

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW ADVOCACY AND POLICY IMPACT CONTINUED

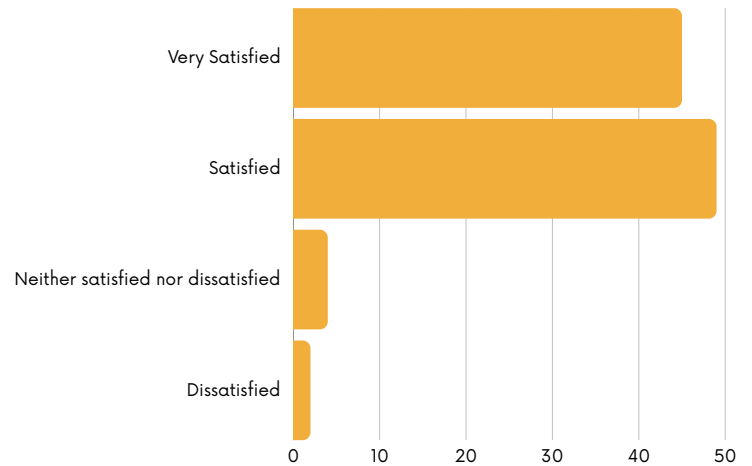
SBO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The strategic direction of the association and its goal of being member-focused remained a priority over the 2024 school year. To that end, we engaged with you to determine if you're satisfied with the services being offered by SBO. Below, are some of the results.

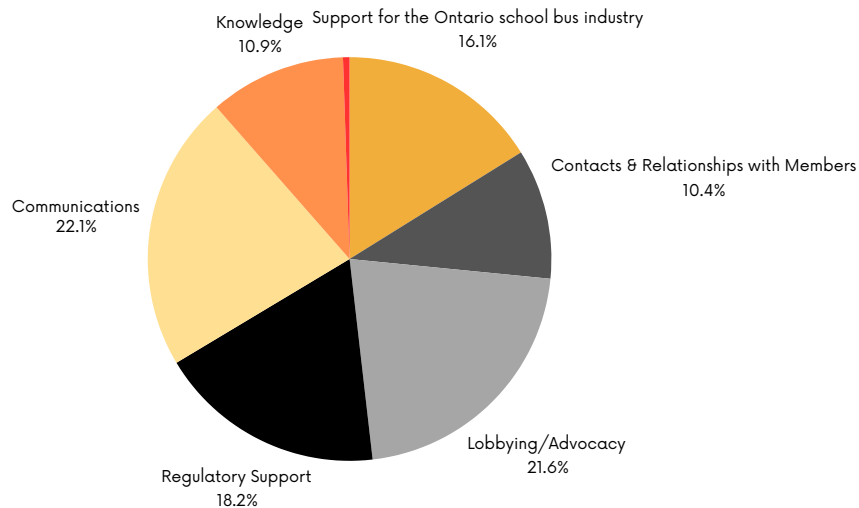
Do you agree the School Bus Ontario Board of Directors is guiding the association in the proper direction?



Overall, are you satisfied with the services being provided by School Bus Ontario?



What do you feel are the biggest benefits of being a member of School Bus Ontario?
(select all that apply)



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.)

SBO SUPPLIER MEMBER BENEFITS

In addition to the other member benefits, new suppliers will be able to network with our 70 + operator members, including branch offices, manufacturer members and others. New suppliers will be able to sponsor at least two newsletters per year which includes a banner, hyperlink to website or additional information along with a short blurb of who you are. At least once per year, supplier members will have an opportunity to offer a 10 to 15 minute (max) presentation on a webinar to our members. Further, as an SBO member, suppliers have access to our membership directory and have an opportunity to attend the Ontario Transportation Expo (OTE) as an SBO member.



SAFETY & LEGISLATION



- 2024 finally saw the transition to the integrated emissions and safety inspection program known as DriveON. SBO held several educational webinars as the transition approached to try and support our members. SBO also arranged for a school bus inspection demonstration and question/answer period in May 2024, to provide our members with additional opportunities to seek clarification around the new inspection program. Throughout the transition, SBO has been promoting the interests of the school bus industry to push toward a flexible and efficient system. As various concessions and updates were released by MTO, SBO worked to ensure members were aware of these options to mitigate the impact of changing to DriveON.
- The Transport Canada Task Force on School Bus Safety continued to meet and SBO remained involved to add the school bus operator's perspective to the discussion. In 2023, the government published new proposed regulations for school buses in order to solicit comments from the school bus industry. Throughout 2024, SBO worked diligently to push for clarity regarding the purpose of the proposed standards and draw attention to the need for efficient, effective, and reliable equipment.
- In December 2024, Transport Canada published their finalized updates to the Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations (School Buses). SBO has worked to ensure members are aware of the upcoming changes to newly manufactured school buses and the impacts taking effect in November 2027.
- SBO continues to participate in the D250 committee. This allows SBO to remain on the inside track surrounding discussions that may impact future school bus standards. Furthermore, SBO's participation in the D250 committee ensures the association remains involved with the various Canadian stakeholders who help make decisions impacting school busing across the country.
- SBO has been working to ensure members are aware of the impacts that automated enforcement is having in the school bus industry. Since late 2022, red-light cameras and automated speed enforcement convictions have been pointed on school bus company CVORs. SBO has been working to raise awareness of these convictions and some of the factors members need to consider when evaluating their safety performance.
- SBO continues to meet with Ministry of Transportation contacts to discuss how school bus licencing barriers can be mitigated. Meetings and discussions continue surrounding topics such as medical reviews, school bus driver background checks, DriveTest and ServiceOntario processes, and much more.

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

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

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".



2024 P.R.I.D.E. Program Update

The year 2024 has ushered in numerous positive changes to our program. Our newly revised curriculum has received approval from the Ministry of Transportation (MTO). The P.R.I.D.E. Program is now delivering this updated and enhanced curriculum to comply with all of MTO's new standards. Participants in the revamped program have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback since its launch.

This year, our seven new master trainers have successfully expanded their skills by adding more programs to their repertoire, proving to be valuable assets to our team. Two of these new trainers have been mentored by Adam Arbour and Kathie Heyworth to become class trainers. They shadowed Adam and Kathie for a week each and are set to lead their first complete programs independently this Spring. We sincerely appreciate the dedication and hard work of our master trainers in ensuring the program's success.

In 2024, we have successfully completed eleven full programs and conducted five successful Recertification programs. Additionally, we travelled to Metrolinx to facilitate an in-house recertification program for their training team. We are now offering this option to our member companies with a training team of 11 or more trainers who wish to have their trainers recertified all at once.

We are thrilled about the updates and enhancements made to the program, and we look forward to its future developments. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our operator members who have supported the P.R.I.D.E. Program over the past 32 years, and we are excited to continue serving you.



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

What You Will Receive Attending the Program:

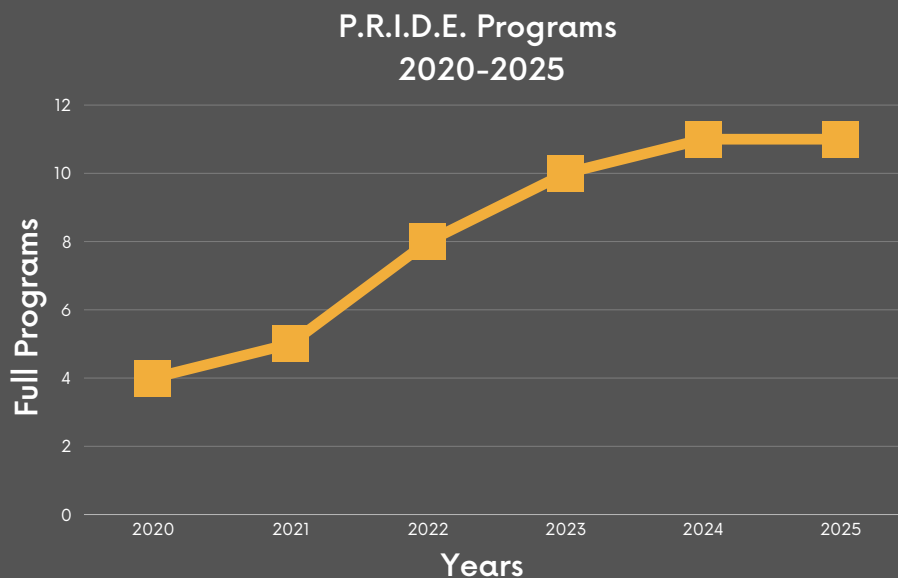


- A dual learning environment that is 50% in-classroom and 50% on-road.
- Certification for "Signing Authority" with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation in order to upgrade and renew driver's licenses on your own premises (if a passing grade is achieved and all other MTO requirements are met).
- Indispensable 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:

- 450+ participants attended the program since 2020 and have gained their Signing Authority.
- 340+ Signing Authorities have attended the Recertification Program since 2020 and maintained their Signing Authority status.
- We have received approval from the MTO for our new curriculum, and we have commenced teaching it.
- Discounted registration fee is provided for members.
- Additional programs have been added in 2025 to meet industry demand. As always, programs will be added if demand requires it.

For questions or more information, please contact Katie Kersten at kkeyworth@schoolbusontario.ca



ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION EXPO (OTE)



Conference: March 31 - April 2, 2025
Trade Show: April 1, 2025

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!



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2025

Looking toward this coming year and beyond, our priority at School Bus Ontario remains keeping this association robust and relevant. Our strong government relations work and efforts to establish relationships with political officials at Queen's Park is a strength – we will not let our guard down in these efforts. We further want to ensure that the association remains strong, and we can only do this because of your support.

School Bus Ontario is able to do good work because of your support through your membership and for that we'd like to thank you for having our trust. As we move into 2025, let's continue to grow, learn, and advocate together. We're excited for what lies ahead and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events. Wishing you a prosperous and successful
New Year!



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