

OPTA ENDORSES OBRP

OPTA has submitted a [paper](#) to the MTO expressing our support for maintaining the Ontario Bus Replacement Program (OBRP) in anticipation of the discussions with the Ministry of Finance for next year's Budget. The paper outlines the significant return on investment the Province has experienced as the result of the OBRP, including the potential for reductions in vehicle maintenance and servicing costs and the quicker progress toward fully accessible conventional services. The brief also identifies some administrative issues that warrant further discussion with officials in both ministries.

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

OPTA has forwarded a [Pre-Budget Submission](#), in conjunction with CUTA, to the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Dwight Duncan. The submission recognizes the severe fiscal challenges facing the Minister at this time but makes a strong case for maintaining levels of investment in transit, and specifically to continue support for the Gas Tax and Ontario Bus Replacement Programs.

C 118 – DISTRACTED DRIVING REGULATIONS

As you all know, new regulations for the use of hand-held devices went into effect on October 26th. The transit industry has been given 3 years to migrate from the use of hand-held two-way radios toward wireless solutions, something that could cost the industry as much as \$50 million by some estimates. Once the three-year exemption period ends, MTO officials have advised OPTA that hand-held use of a two-way radio would only be allowed if the vehicle is "entirely off the roadway and not impeding traffic" or the vehicle is "lawfully parked". In other Canadian jurisdictions where similar legislation is in effect, public transit has been exempted with respect to their communications systems. OPTA will be meeting with Minister Jim Bradley in the near future to ask for a re-consideration of this position.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

OPTA's series of Fall Regional meetings took place between Sept 16th and October 20th in Sault Ste. Marie, London, Toronto and Cobourg respectively. Thank you to those who hosted and participated in these meetings. Members wanting a copy of the "OPTA Update" presentation should contact Norm Cheesman at the OPTA office, cheesman@ontariopublictransit.ca. Thanks also should go to Durham Transit who kindly hosted the Maintenance Committee Meeting on October 2nd. More meetings will be announced in the near future, and be sure to read about the upcoming Marketing Committee meeting below.

BILL 168 – VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

On November 23rd, OPTA appeared at Queen's Park before the Standing Committee on Social Policy to present its [submission](#) on Bill 168. The proposed Bill includes a number of new requirements to address violence and harassment in the workplace in the form of policies, programs, risk assessments, and the provision of information to workers where a person has a history of violence. OPTA has raised a number of concerns that relate to the conditions for refusing work, the requirement to provide confidential information, and the employer's obligations with respect to domestic violence. When the hearings have concluded, the Committee will present its report to the Legislature before it comes back for 3rd Reading.

EASIER TO POST MESSAGES

Some recent changes to the Communications Centre portion of the OPTA web site will make it easier to post messages in the Discussion Forum. OPTA has eliminated the need for user names and passwords in an effort to increase "traffic" at the site and encourage the exchange of information and ideas online. Messages will be moderated before they appear live on line, and you will be able to communicate with other people in the industry much more easily than before. At the same time, you will also be able to post news announcements, job postings, and other information more easily. By the same token, the Discussion Forum will be truly open: anyone, including the general public, can use the site to post a message. Please visit www.ontariopublictransit.ca/communications.asp and you're there.

AODA

OPTA has met three times since the summer with officials and/or the Ministers of Transportation and Community and Social Services in an effort to communicate its views with respect to the implementation of AODA standards, with particular focus on the Transportation Standard. In addition, we also met with Charles Beer who has been mandated to conduct a review of the program to date and report back to the Minister. OPTA continues to advocate a more gradual and harmonized implementation which was defined in a [position paper](#) earlier this fall. Systems are encouraged to have their respective Council's endorsement of the approach set out in this paper, and communicate same to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

HST IMPACT ON TRANSIT

OPTA, with the assistance of London Transit and in co-operation with AMO, has prepared a report entitled "[Assessment of the Impact of the Harmonized Sales Tax on Municipal Public Transit Services](#)", looking at the potential impact of the HST on both conventional and specialized transit operations. Based on the analysis to date, and in accordance with the intent of the legislation, the move from RST to HST is expected to be fiscally neutral on a sector-wide basis for municipalities, but some systems will see an increase in costs while others will see a decrease. The impact on individual systems will be subject to size, the nature of expenditures and whether or not the organizational structure delivering the service is considered a municipality. You can use the financial model built into the excel spreadsheets that are also on the web site, plug in your own numbers, and get an idea of the impact of the HST for your system.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

During the regional meetings, interest was expressed in holding a Marketing Committee meeting again in the near future. We are in the process of re-building the contact list, so if you were unaware of this development or if your organization is interested in participating, please contact OPTA. The next meeting will take place in Mississauga on December 8th.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2009 AND 2010

December 3	OPTA Board Conference Call
December 8	Marketing Committee, Mississauga
February 7-12	P.R.I.D.E. Program, Burlington
March 2-3	Urban Transportation Summit, Toronto
April 19-21	Ontario Transportation Expo, Toronto
July 11-16	P.R.I.D.E. Program, Burlington