



Ontario Public Health Association
l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
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For immediate release

Public Health Officials call for Healthy School Bus Program to Reduce Childhood Exposure to Air Pollution

Toronto, November 21 – The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) released its report, *“School Buses, Air Pollution & Children’s Health”* today. The report’s findings suggest that children can be exposed to substantial levels of air pollution while traveling on school buses.

“We are recommending that the Province of Ontario establish a Healthy School Bus Program to promote emission reductions from school buses that will improve the health of children in this province” said Garry Aslanyan, OPHA President.

The OPHA report explains that school buses can be self-polluting, with emissions from tailpipes and engine compartments polluting the air on-board school buses. The air pollutants of greatest concern are fine particulate matter and diesel particulate matter which have been associated with a broad range of acute and chronic health effects including increases in respiratory infections, aggravation of asthma symptoms, reduced lung function, and increases in heart and lung diseases including lung cancer.

“While children may only spend a short period of time each day on school buses, they can be exposed to substantial levels of air pollution while doing so” explains Dr. Hanif Kassam, the Medical Officer of Health for Peel Region. “With 800,000 Ontario children using school buses every day, these exposures can represent a significant public health concern.”

The OPHA recommends that the Ministry of the Environment establish a Healthy School Bus Program that will encourage early retirement of older school buses, retrofitting of newer school buses, and the early adoption of school buses that meet the 2007 emission standards. We are also recommending that the Canadian Government establish a Healthy School Bus Fund to support Ontario’s program and programs like it across the country.

Dr. Liana Nolan, the Medical Officer of Health for Waterloo Region characterizes this as a health risk that can be reduced. “There are new technologies that can be used to significantly reduce exposures on board school buses” she explains. “These technologies can reduce acute health impacts among children today and chronic health effects among those children in later life”.

To view a copy of the report, visit www.opha.on.ca/resources/schoolbus.pdf

Founded in 1949, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a voluntary, charitable association that provides leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthens the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.

- 30 -

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