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August 10, 2006

The Honourable Rona Ambrose  
Federal Minister of the Environment  
Environment Canada  
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière, North Tower,  
28th Floor 10 Wellington Street  
Gatineau, Quebec  
K1A 0H3

Dear Minister Ambrose:

**Re: School Buses, Air Pollution & Children's Health**

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) to encourage you to establish a Healthy School Bus Fund as part of the national clean air strategy currently in development. OPHA released a study entitled "*School Buses, Air Pollution & Children's Health: Improving Children's Health & Local Air Quality by Reducing School Bus Emissions*" that found exposures on-board school buses can account for 25 to 30% of the daily exposure to air pollutants that children experience. This is extremely significant because tens of thousands of children -- who are known to be particularly sensitive to the negative effects of air pollution -- are transported by school buses in communities that commonly experience excessive levels of air pollution.

With new technologies that can be applied to school buses, there is an opportunity to significantly reduce the exposure of children to air pollutants that have been associated with acute health effects such as hospital admissions for asthma symptoms and chronic health effects such as heart disease and lung cancer.

While the new school buses built to 2007 vehicle emission standards will greatly reduce exposures that can be encountered on-board school buses, millions of children will continue to be transported in older vehicles that could remain on the roads for many years to come.

With a Healthy School Bus Fund similar to that developed by the U.S. Federal Government or the California State Government, the Federal Ministry of the Environment could encourage the retirement of the oldest and most polluting school buses and retrofits for those that have many years of service ahead of them. We are confident that this Fund could produce many immediate and long-term health benefits as well as health care savings worth many times the investment.

I have attached a copy of the OPHA report referred to above for your information. Founded in 1949, OPHA is a voluntary, charitable, non-profit association representing over 3000 individuals and ten constituent societies from various sectors and disciplines working in public and community health throughout Ontario. Public health includes health promotion, disease prevention, health protection and population health strategies aimed at improving the determinants of health for individuals and communities.

OPHA is a partner in the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment. OPHA's work on reducing exposures to contaminants on-board school buses represents only one of the initiatives focused on children's health.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss our recommendations in more detail. Please contact Franca Ursitti at (905) 791-7800 ext. 2712 to organize a meeting.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Garry Aslanyan  
President, OPHA

cc. The Honourable Tony Clement, Federal Minister of Health  
Brooke Claxton Building,  
Tunney's Pasture  
Postal Locator: 0906C  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

**Attachments:**

School Bus Report  
Press Release