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November 30, 2005

The Honourable Laurel C. Broten  
Minister of the Environment  
12th Floor, 135 St. Clair Avenue West  
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P5

Dear Minister:

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

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA). Founded in 1949, the OPHA is a volunteer, non-profit, charitable organization established to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. The OPHA represents over 3000 individuals and 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.

I have attached, a new report, "*School Buses, Air Pollution & Children's Health*", that recommends that the Government of Ontario establish a Healthy School Bus Program and that the Government of Canada establish a Healthy School Bus Fund to encourage the retirement of older school buses and the retrofitting of newer school buses to improve children's health and local air quality.

Exposure studies conducted in several jurisdictions have demonstrated that concentrations of air pollutants on-board school buses can be several times greater than concentrations in outdoor air. This is a concern for three reasons: these diesel-related air pollutants have been shown to produce a broad array of acute and chronic health impacts at the levels present in outdoor air; we know that children are much more sensitive to air pollutants than adults; and there are 800,000 Ontario children being transported by school buses each year.

There are actions that can be taken to reduce childhood exposure to air pollution on-board school buses. One exposure study found that concentrations of diesel particulate matter and fine particulate matter could be reduced to outdoor air levels when school buses were

outfitted with diesel particulate filters and engine crankcase filtration devices and run on ultra-low sulphur diesel. By retrofitting newer buses and replacing older buses with new school buses that are outfitted with these emission control devices, we can significantly reduce childhood exposure to these diesel-related air pollutants while simultaneously reducing emissions from these vehicles by up to 90%.

We are recommending that the Ministry of the Environment establish Ontario's Healthy School Bus Program because of its impact on local air quality as well as children's health. If you have any questions respecting this report or its recommendations, please contact the OPHA School Bus Project Manager, Kim Perrotta, at 905-628-9437.

Sincerely,

Dr. Garry Aslanyan  
President, Ontario Public Health Association

cc. The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario  
The Honourable Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education  
The Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health  
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario

**attach.** [School Bus Report](#) (PDF, 4.9MB)  
[Press Release](#) (PDF, 18kb)