Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! WOW! 2018, where has the time gone? I would like to welcome you all back from your Christmas Holidays! As well, a big welcome to our new Associations! I hope everyone had a wonderful time getting together with family and friends over the holidays.

The first quarter has been very busy. Just to recap for our new Associations, OFHSA consists of a volunteer Board of Directors and one paid Executive Secretary. Our Executive Secretary has been extremely busy meeting the needs of members, Associations, requests from the Board of Directors, the public, as well as accomplishing the day-to-day work of the office. The office is the hub where all information passes through via phone, e-mail or in person.

The Board of Directors have been busy fulfilling the needs of OFHSA via their workgroups. A few directors were able to attend some conferences. Responses and/or letters were sent to various Ministries on topics such as: Transformation Steering Committee, revising the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) and the Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG), Rural and Northern Programs, Public Health Nurses, and School Bus Transportation.

Just a quick reminder if you have not sent in your Association’s membership fees, please do so. For the OFHSA Annual Meeting, we have some bylaw amendments as well as resolutions coming forward. In order to be able to vote, your Association must be in good standing. If you are not sure if your Association has sent in their membership fees, please contact your H&S Council, or if you do not have one in your area, contact the office.

Although we are in the month of January, before you know it, April will be here with the OFHSA Conference & Annual Meeting. Have you thought about volunteering at the Federation level? We currently have vacant workgroups and are always looking for new faces to join us from across the province. Check out the website for the OFHSA Workgroups brochure and the Federation Volunteer Form. The website is also filled with valuable resources to assist members. Please take a look, you may be surprised.

I would like to say thank you to the Board of Directors (working around their busy schedules) for all the hard work they do for OFHSA. I would also like to say thank you to the Associations and H&S Councils for the work being done in their local school communities. We want to hear from you! Please e-mail us the accomplishments and activities happening in your home and school community so that we can share ideas with our members across the province. OFHSA is proud of our volunteers, at all levels, working together to obtain “The Best for Each Student”.

Eugema Ings
Parent Advocacy

OFHSA has been busy recently in terms of Parent Advocacy. On behalf of our members, we have responded to *PPM161 (draft) - Supporting Children & Students with Prevalent Medical conditions (Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes and/or Epilepsy) in Schools.* We referenced our policy calling for *‘every publicly funded school in the Province of Ontario to have a Public Health Nurse on site full time’.*

It was mentioned that the public health nurse is a professional, schooled in the science and/or service of public health best suited to:

- Support student well-being
- Provide individual Plans of Care for these students to manage their daily medical needs
- Determine the components to support students with prevalent medical conditions that should be included in school board policy or policies
- Assist families in rural and northern communities where programs and supports range from non-existent to fair
- Raise awareness to ensure schools are safer for students with prevalent medical conditions
- Provide for connections in community health care

We have also been part of the Ministry of Education’s - Ontario’s Engagement on Education Assessment. The scope of the review included classroom assessments, large-scale provincial assessments, including Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments and Ontario’s participation in pan-Canadian and international assessment programs. Our Board compiled an OFHSA response to the questions asked. As well, many of our members attended local round-table events hosted by the Ministry to request feedback on the same.

OFHSA has also responded to the Ministry of Education in response to their request to solicit information regarding student transportation in Ontario. We replied with the OFHSA policy regarding “School Travel Planning (STP)” stating that it addresses the issues of sustainability, service delivery standards, safety measures and healthy living using a collaborative community-based approach.

We continue to advocate for students citing our policies where applicable:

- Ontario’s plan to strengthen Rural and Northern Education
  - Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG)
  - Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)
- Grants for Students Needs - Education Funding Consultation
- Cannabis Legislation (Bill 174, Cannabis Act)
  - There needs to be more of a focus on impact on mental health and addiction and adolescent brain development.
ONTARIO SEEKING PUBLIC INPUT ON STUDENT TRANSPORTATION


Ontario is seeking public input on how to strengthen its student transportation system and create a new vision for the future of student transportation that will be responsive to the changing needs of students and school boards, as well as school bus drivers and operators.

The engagement focuses on four key areas: safety and well-being for students, equity in transportation services, responsiveness to student needs, and accountability in service delivery.

People in Ontario are encouraged to get involved by:

- Reading A Discussion Paper on a New Vision for Student Transportation in Ontario
- Reviewing the online discussion questions
- Submitting ideas and suggestions to ST.newvision@ontario.ca by March 29, 2018.

Feedback will also be gathered from school boards, student transportation partners and industry groups. Their insights along with public feedback will be used to produce a final report on strategies and recommendations for creating a sustainable student transportation system. This report will form future changes to transportation funding and policy.

To address the unique labour market challenges faced by the sector, Ontario is also investing $60 million over the next two years to support the recruitment and retention of drivers while this broader review is underway.

Developing a new vision for student transportation is part of Ontario’s plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change, including a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest change in medicare in a generation.

Quick Facts

- More than 800,000 students - or 40 percent of students enrolled in Ontario - use student transportation services each school day.

- Earlier this year, Joan Green and Michel Paulin were appointed as the two executive co-leads for the student transportation engagement.

- Ontario provides school boards with funding for student transportation through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). For the 2017-2018 school year, funding for student transportation is projected to be $919.6 million.
Are you coming?
Conference is a good way to meet new associations and connect with old friends .... the best networking opportunity OFHSA offers our members.

Find new ways to deal with old challenges, share successes as well as consider new fundraising opportunities for your school community.

Friday - Dessert, Displays and Dialogue

Saturday - 6 workshops to choose from

**New this year** the Annual Meeting follows the Conference on Saturday

What is your superpower?
Volunteers that set out to make a change are indeed superheroes.

How do we contribute as Home and School members towards achieving ‘The Best for Each Student’ at our schools? Members will learn what their personal superpowers are, what they are capable of achieving as volunteers and discover how superpowers can be improved.

Why you should come to Conference?
✓ Networking opportunities
✓ Learning opportunities
✓ Gather knowledge and support to deal with challenges and opportunities at your association
✓ Share successes stories and inspire each other

Stay tuned for details!

THE ONTARIO FEDERATION OF HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS
**Awards Information**

The nomination deadline for OFHSA Awards is fast approaching — only a few weeks left until the February 1, 2018 deadline. Here are the ways in which you can acknowledge those within your school or board who have demonstrated support of a better community and parent involvement.

**OFHSA Citizenship Award (Grades 5 to 12)**
Awarded to a student who demonstrates a concern for the betterment of society at school and in the community. One student from each grade can be nominated by the H&S Association.

**OFHSA Educator Award**
This award is presented to an educator who has demonstrated, in an exceptional way, their support for parental involvement in education through the Home and School organization.

**Col. R.S. McLaughlin Memorial Award**
This award is presented to an individual who has demonstrated an outstanding service to education by fostering co-operation between Parents and Teachers and by promoting understanding between the Home and the School. This Award is meant for Home and School members who have made a significant contribution to the Federation at the provincial level.

**OFHSA Awards Nomination Forms**

Use only the 2018 forms available @ [https://ofhsa.on.ca/for-members/#awards-tab](https://ofhsa.on.ca/for-members/#awards-tab)

All nomination packages MUST be postmarked by February 1, 2018

Ensure ALL information is clearly printed (in ink) or typed

Read and follow the instructions carefully to ensure your nominee is not disqualified based on:

- forms from previous years or
- forms were filled out improperly or
- the maximum size of the nomination package was exceeded

Avoid using the nominee’s name as much as possible. Use “she” or “he” or other descriptive instead.

Return the completed nomination forms to the **OFHSA Awards Workgroup**:

OFHSA Awards Workgroup
51 Stuart Street
Hamilton ON L8L 1B5

Nomination submissions may be accepted by e-mail with restrictions

**Other Ways to Recognize Your Volunteers**

**Volunteer Skills Portfolio**
Now is the perfect time to register and start working on your VSP! Fill out and submit your VSP registration form and start recording your volunteering to qualify for the Ada Courtice Certificate of Leadership and Learning. [https://ofhsa.on.ca/for-members/#awards-tab](https://ofhsa.on.ca/for-members/#awards-tab)

**Pins**
There are a variety of pins available for purchase from OFHSA. Consider purchasing them for a past-president, president, dedicated volunteer. These can be worn proudly on the Conference Lanyard. We can even include them in their welcome package at Conference as a surprise! [https://ofhsa.on.ca/publications-pins/](https://ofhsa.on.ca/publications-pins/)
**PROVINCIAL NEWS**

- The Premier’s Awards for Accepting Schools recognize those across the province that have done exceptional and innovative work in creating a safe, inclusive accepting school environment. This award recognizes schools that have demonstrated initiative, creativity and leadership in promoting a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate.  
  

- Minimum wage increases to $14.00 /hr on January 1, 2018. Studies show that higher minimum wage results in less employee turnover, which increases business productivity. Other changes include ensuring workers are entitled to at least 3 weeks vacation after 5 years with the same employer. [https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2017/12/ontarios-minimum-wage-to-rise-to-14-on-january-1.html](https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2017/12/ontarios-minimum-wage-to-rise-to-14-on-january-1.html)

- Do you know of a child who was born in 2014? They are eligible to attend Kindergarten in September. Inform the parents and have them register as soon as possible at their home school.

- Healthy Schools Working Table is meeting January 17th, 2018 in Toronto. They are looking for input on priority items such as the PPM150 - School and Beverage Policy and Bill 174 - Cannabis, Smoke-Free Ontario and Road Safety Statute Law Amendment Act. As well they are looking for input regarding supporting students with medical conditions in schools.  
  
  [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/healthyschools.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/healthyschools.html)

**PARENTAL MEDIA CONSENT / RELEASE**

Did you know that each year permission is needed to post pictures of the students. As a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure your child’s safety. The teacher / school / school board, should be obtaining your consent prior to posting any student work, digital pictures, etc. on social media or online. All uses should not contain identifying information for any student, unless permission is granted.

There should be some form of permission/consent for each school board but it may differ in the format. Generally this is to be signed at the beginning of each school year. It may be a separate consent form or a specific section on student registration forms for media consent/release to be given or not given by parents. Make sure you know what you are signing. It may be a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ check box with a signature. There may be lines to specify other detail such as, for example, allowing pictures to be posted in the school but not online.

If you say ‘no’ to giving consent to media release, the staff can always contact you to ask for your permission to use a one-time picture, piece of artwork etc. for a certain purpose. You can give permission on a case-by-case basis.

Children’s online presence begins with you.

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Submitted articles are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Inc. or its members.