



HARMONIZED SALES TAX – ADMINISTRATION AND IMPACT

As a result of follow-up questions from OPTA, senior Ministry of Finance officials have clarified most of the outstanding questions which members may have had with respect to the new HST system which goes into effect on July 1, 2010. One of the big changes for our industry is that those goods and services which are currently subject to GST only [and not PST] will be subject to the new HST. That means that things like diesel fuel, natural gas and hydro which are currently all subject to GST only will all become subject to the new HST, and the related rebates (100% of the GST portion and 78% of the PST portion) will apply. The memo which was previously distributed to OPTA members is available on the OPTA web site.

BILL 118 – COUNTERING DISTRACTED DRIVING ACT

On May 27th, representatives of OPTA and CUTA made a presentation to MTO officials in the Safety Policy and Education Branch regarding the drafting of regulations for Bill 118 which has now received Royal Assent. OPTA is looking for exemptions for on-board equipment which is used for real-time communications to ensure the safety and efficiency of its operations. OPTA has requested a blanket exemption from the new legislation for transit vehicles. Failing that, we have proposed equipment- specific exemptions for things such as:

- vehicle radio phones (with telephone handsets), two way radio's and CB's that are used for communication between the conveyance operator and the control centre or management personnel, and;
- mobile data terminals (screen and touch button control for operator interfacing) that are part of an automatic vehicle location/communication system

The MTO is expected to announce the new regulations in the September/October timeframe.

BILL 168 - CHANGES TO THE OHSА - VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Last Spring, OPTA met with senior officials at the Ministry of Labour concerning proposed changes to the Ontario Health and Safety Act (OHSА) as it pertains to violence and harassment in the workplace. Since then, the Minister of Labour has introduced Bill 168 in the Legislature to amend the OHSА in a number of areas, and OPTA will continue to meet with officials at Queen's Park over the summer as well as seek an appearance before the appropriate committee when the Bill passes Second Reading later this Fall. OPTA opposes inclusion of the right to refuse work related to workplace violence, but at a minimum, we are arguing that the right to refuse work should be limited to circumstances where a worker has reasonable and probable grounds that there is imminent danger of physical injury (as currently exists in other Canadian jurisdictions).

SKILFORM “TAXI MODULE” CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAM NOW FINALIZED

Since late last year, OPTA has been working with the Accessibility Directorate at MCSS and its training partner, OTEC, to develop a Sedan Taxi module for the SkilForm Customer Service training for persons with disabilities. The new program, which is modeled after the existing SkilForm program for transit drivers, includes a Participant Manual, a Leader's [or Trainer's] Guide, and a Self-Study Manual. “SkilForm Taxi”, as it is called, was developed with input from representatives of several disability groups and the taxi industry, and has been well received based on two recent pilot sessions. The new training course material is consistent with the requirements of Regulation 429 (the Customer Service Standard under the AODA), to which public sector organizations must comply by January 1, 2010. Private sector organizations have until January 1, 2012 to reach compliance.

MEETING WITH FINANCE RE: NO-FAULT INSURANCE REGIME

Earlier this spring, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario [FSCO] released its [Report](#) on the 5-year review of automobile insurance. As a result of a submission from OPTA and CUTA, the Report included Recommendation #37 that the “government should consider legislative amendments to reflect the unique status of public transit services operated by municipal authorities by excluding injuries from no-fault where no collision has occurred”. We will be working with officials at Queen’s Park over the summer on the technical aspects of the enabling legislation, which could be introduced as early as this Fall, and possibly taking effect as early as January 2010.

AODA IMPLEMENTATION: AN UPDATE

OPTA and CUTA will be meeting with Accessibility Directorate officials in MCSS over the summer to ensure that industry concerns with respect to the Transportation Standard and related compliance timeframes are fully understood prior to the document being drafted for Cabinet submission. OPTA also recently provided input on the draft Information & Communication and Employment Standards. We continue to press for realistic implementation timeframes and harmonization of all remaining standards.

A reminder to all members that you need to be compliant with the AODA Customer Service Standard (Regulation 429/07) effective January 1, 2010.

FEDERAL HOURS OF WORK

Transport Canada, at the request of OC Transpo, has passed an amendment to the Commercial Vehicle Drivers Hours of Service Regulation under the Motor Vehicle Transport Act to remove the compliance exemption for public transit for federally-regulated transit systems. OPTA was initially concerned by commentary from the Minister that the Federal Government would also pursue the removal of such exemptions for transit as may currently exist under provincial and territorial legislation. Currently in Ontario, similar provisions to the Federal regulation are set out under the Highway Traffic Act Regulation 555/06 to which Ontario transit systems are exempt. Given this concern, OPTA wrote a [letter](#) to the Hon. Jim Bradley, Minister of Transportation, calling on the Ontario Government to maintain the current exemption (under Highway Traffic Act Regulation 555/06) for Ontario transit systems should the Ontario Government receive such a request from his Federal counterpart to eliminate the current exemption. Recently, the federal Transport Minister indicated that he will not be pursuing other jurisdictions to mirror the federal regulations.

SUPREME COURT STRIKES DOWN BUS AD BAN

On July 10, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down transit policies banning all political ads, saying they violate the Charter and rights to free speech. The ruling was in response to a 2005 decision by the GVTA and BC Transit not to allow political advertising on buses during a provincial election.

OTE SURVEY RESULTS

OPTA recently conducted a survey of those who attended the OTE Conference in April to gauge reaction to the conference and identify areas of improvement for next year. Thank you to all those who participated and took time to provide your views. A question-by-question breakdown of the survey [results](#) is available on the OPTA web site.

FALL REGIONAL MEETINGS

The dates and locations for the Fall Regional Meetings have now been set as you will see in Upcoming Events below. Regional meetings will be open to all members. Business members are welcome to attend to participate in the established agenda, space permitting, but time will not be allocated for showcasing products or services as has been done in the past.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| August 9-14 | PROfessional Instructor in Driver Education [or P.R.I.D.E.] – Burlington |
| September 16 | Northern Region Fall Meeting, Sault Ste. Marie |
| September 23 | SkilForm Customer Service Training for Participants, Etobicoke |
| September 24 | SkilForm Customer Service “Train the Trainer”, Etobicoke |
| September 24 | OPTA Board Meeting, Mississauga |
| October 1 | SouthWest Region Fall Meeting, London |
| October 7 | South Central Region Fall Meeting, Toronto |
| October 20 | Eastern Region Fall Meeting, Cobourg |



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