



OPTA to Develop Accessibility Training Module for Taxi Industry

(Toronto, February 2, 2009) The Ontario Public Transit Association, or OPTA, announces that it will develop training for taxi drivers to fulfill the training requirements of the new Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, the first of five accessibility standards to be developed under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. This initiative is a partnership between OPTA, OTEC – Training and HR Solutions, and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) through the EnAbling Change Partnership Program.

Under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (the customer service standard), municipalities and public transit organizations, including taxi services that are contracted by municipalities to supplement their public transit services, must comply with the requirements of the customer service standard by 2010. OPTA already provides training on accessible service to conventional transit systems through a course known as SkilForm. Project funding from the EnAbling Change Partnership Program will be used to modify that program to develop a “taxi module” to meet the needs of the taxi industry.

A project advisory committee has been established and includes OPTA, OTEC, Beck Taxi, Dignity Transportation, CNIB, Canadian Mental Health Association, the Canadian Paraplegic Association, and the City of Toronto.

“Our goal in this undertaking is to enable taxi drivers to provide excellent, skilful service to customers with disabilities and support compliance with the new customer service standard”, said Norman Cheesman, the CEO of OPTA. “We are pleased to be working with our training partner, OTEC, once again”, he added.

Project deliverables include the completion of both a trainer’s manual and a self-study manual.

The new taxi module of SkilForm will be piloted in the spring, drawing on key target audiences as classroom participants. The pilot will provide useful feedback and provide real-time guidance to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all stakeholders.

OPTA is a provincial association representing public transit system providers, community transportation partners, suppliers, governments and transportation experts. For more information, please visit www.ontariopublictransit.ca

Otec is an independent, not-for-profit training and human resource development organization which has evolved from the 2005 consolidation of the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (Otec) established in 1991, and Customer Service Excellence Corporation (CSEC) established in 2001. Otec is also Ontario's representative on the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC), the national sector council for tourism, funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), and is the tourism sector council organization for the Province of Ontario representing the labour, skills development, training, and human resource issues of the sector. For more information, please visit www.otec.org.