



Backgrounder

Safety of Wireless Technology in Schools

- Student safety is, and always will be, our first priority as a school board.
- Wireless networks are not new technology. Wireless networking has been in place for years within public buildings, schools, universities and even many homes.
- First and foremost, we are educators. We rely on the direction of public health authorities in managing issues of broader community health.
- Recently, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Arlene King, the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, and Peterborough's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, have stated that wireless technology does **not** pose a public health risk.
- The World Health Organization (WHO), the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) and Health Canada have all examined this issue and concluded that wireless networking of public institutions is safe.
- We are confident, as is Leona Dombrowsky, Ontario's Minister of Education, in a letter addressed to the Simcoe County District School Board, "that these organizations have the scientific, technical and public policy knowledge needed to make this (wireless safety) determination."
- We believe in providing our students and staff with all the tools they require to develop the skills necessary in our modern society.
- One of the first steps in the Board's new Instructional Technology Plan is to equip our schools and buildings with a "wireless" network to support digital learning. The installation of these school wireless networks is scheduled to take place throughout the 2010-11 school year.
- Health Canada has established standards for protecting human health from radiofrequency electromagnetic energy with its Safety Code 6 (2009). These safety guidelines have set limits for safe human exposure to electromagnetic energy from radiofrequency (RF) devices, including cell phones and base stations (used in wireless networking).
- According to Health Canada, "there is at present no scientific basis for the premise of health risks from radiofrequency electromagnetic energy at levels below the limits within this safety code."
- Wireless networks within board schools will conform, in all aspects, to Health Canada regulations.

- In a public letter regarding wireless safety in schools, Nina Arron, Director, Public Health Protection and Prevention Branch, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, stated:

“Many devices such as cordless phones, computer communication and Wi-Fi units which are wireless transmitters that may be used in a school setting do not have the capacity to exceed the radiofrequency electromagnetic energy within the code [Health Canada Safety Code 6] and therefore would not be of health concern.”