

November 20, 2010

Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier
Legislative Bldg, Room 281
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

Re: 2010 Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8 Health and Physical Education: Human Development and Sexual Health

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit to request that you reinstate the proposed "Human Development and Sexual Health" content of the 2010 Health and Physical Education Curriculum for Grades 1-8 prior to May 2011.

There have been numerous reports written that support the critical need for education to raise awareness on diversity among school aged children, and for the elimination of bullying related to visible and invisible differences. The Ontario education system must take the steps necessary to ensure the development of positive self identity and respect for self and others in our children and youth.

In a recent study of sexual minority youth, "school was reported as the setting for 72% of first experiences with verbal victimization and 56 per cent of first experiences with physical victimization."¹ Sexual minority youth are 1.5 to 7 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers.² It is critical that these vulnerable youth feel safe, supported and valued in order to ensure that they remain in school to complete their education. "A sense of hopelessness and suicidal tendencies has been linked to high risk sexual behaviour" which further puts them at risk for STIs and HIV.³ The same study of youth found that a school climate in which diversity is respected and rules are clear benefits all adolescents.¹

This revised new curriculum document is the result of broad consultation with key stakeholders. It provides comprehensive evidence-based curriculum which is reflective of societal changes and encourages students to make healthy decisions.

Failure to provide accurate, non-judgmental, and age-appropriate information in schools which fosters respect, tolerance and equity within the schools represents not only a pressing health and educational concern, but also has significant public health implications. Curriculum-based sexual health education programs have been shown to delay or reduce sexual behaviours, and increase condom and contraceptive use.

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□ Barrie: 15 Spurling Drive Barrie, ON L4M 6K9 (705) 721-7520 FAX (705) 721-1495	□ Collingwood: 280 Pretty River Pkwy. Collingwood, ON L9Y 4J5 (705) 445-0804 FAX (705) 445-6498	□ Cookstown: 2-25 King Street S. Cookstown, ON L0L 1L0 (705) 458-1103 FAX (705) 458-0105	□ Gravenhurst: 2-5 Pineridge Gate. Gravenhurst, ON, P1P 1Z3 (705) 684-9090 FAX (705) 684-9887	□ Huntsville: 34 Chaffey St. Huntsville, ON P1H 1K1 (705) 789-8813 FAX (705) 789-7245	□ Midland: 1156 St. Andrew's Dr. Box 626, Midland, ON L4R 4L3 (705) 526-8324 FAX: (705) 526-1513	□ Orillia: 12-575 West St., S. Orillia, ON L3V 7N6 (705) 325-9565 FAX (705) 325-2091
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We urge you to not delay the implementation of this new curriculum any further.

Yours truly,

Original signed by

Dennis Roughley
Chair, Board of Health
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

DR:JF:mk

- c. Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Education Minister
- Julia Munroe MPP York Simcoe
- Garfield Dunlop MPP Simcoe North
- Aileen Carroll MPP Barrie
- Norm Miller, MPP Parry Sound-Muskoka
- Jim Wilson MPP Simcoe Grey
- Linda Stewart, Executive Director, aLPHa
- Dr. Arlene King, CMOH, MOHLTC
- All Ontario Boards of Health
- North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integrated Network
- Central Local Health Integrated Network
- Brian Beal, Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
- Anita Simpson, Simcoe County District School Board
- Catherine Shedden, Trillium Lakelands District School Office
- Mikale-Andrée Joly, Conseil scolaire du district catholique Centre-Sud
- Gyslaine Hunter-Perreault, Conseil scolaire Viamonde

¹ Sandfort, Bos, Collier & Metselaar (2010) American Journal of Public Health 100(9) 1696-1700

² Public Health Agency of Canada (2010) Sexual Orientation in Schools

³ Public Health Agency of Canada (2010) Gender Identity in Schools