Mr. Brian Beal

Director of Education

Simcoe Muskoka Catholic

District School Board

46 Alliance Blvd

Barrie, Ontario

L4M 5K3

**Re: Use of WiFi in schools in the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board**

Dear Mr. Beal:

I am writing to let you know of my concerns regarding the use of WiFi in SMCDSB schools. Due to uncertainty regarding the safety of WiFi technology in school settings, I am opposed to its use in Simcoe Muskoka. I understand that the SMCDSB has its mandate to install wifi routers in all of the schools. I disagree with this plan as more and more emerging scientific studies are showing evidence that microwave radiation causes significant health issues. The current Canadian guidelines for microwave radiation are based on a heating effect of a healthy adult male (as the guidelines were originally designed for military personnel working near radar antennas emitting microwave radiation). These guidelines were not designed to consider children, women, nor pregnant women. Thus, a precautionary approach should be adopted at this time until more is known about the health effects from microwave radiation on our children.

In the even the SMCDSB intends to go ahead with its WIFI plan, I make the following requests:

1. **Request SMCDSB hold parent information meetings to openly discuss this issue.**

**Parents need and should be informed of the SMCDSB’s mandate to install wifi routers in all elementary and secondary schools, and timelines. Parents have a right to be informed of the emerging scientific evidence on health effects, have their questions and concerns voiced and addressed.**

1. **Request SMCDSB Conduct a Study**

Reports of health and safety concerns regarding the widespread use of technology are increasing, as common use of wireless gear for voice and data communication (e.g., cell phones, Wi-Fi) produces non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation that at some level is already proven with certainty to be hazardous to human health. We have learned from experience with other environmental contaminants, such as cigarette smoke, pesticides and asbestos, that health effects of unprecedented long term exposure to this radiation may not be epidemiologically evident for years. As such, SMCDSB must provide a thorough, independent study of all that is known about the impact of non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation, review the possible implications for schools and children, and make recommendations to the SMCDSB Health/Wellness and Safety Department and make findings publicly available on the SMCDSB website.

1. **Request Protocol and Enforcement of Regular Shut-off Capability (On/Off Switches)**

To reduce needless exposure of children and staff to radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation, Wi-Fi networks and features must be off by default. The Principal and all staff must be provided with clear instructions and access to turn Wi-Fi on in a specific room for the duration that is required for each class’ use. At all other times, the Wi-Fi network and Wi-Fi features of personal and class use devices are to be turned off. This status must be strictly monitored and maintained by school staff.

1. **Request Wireless Consent Form from Parents and Make Wired Technology Available**

SMCDSB schools currently have numerous computers hardwired to the network with Ethernet cables. These computers must be maintained and must be the preferred choice for internet connectivity. If schools choose to utilize wireless devices, all parents must be required to sign consent for their child(ren) to be exposed to Wi-Fi emissions and consent for their child(ren) to use wireless devices. Students whose parents have not provided consent to their child's exposure or use must be accommodated by providing parents with timely notice of when Wi-Fi/wireless activities will occur, so that alternative arrangements may be made. These accommodations must be in consultation with the school Principal and parents to ensure equity of education for all students.

1. **Request Signage at Wi-Fi Areas**

Students, staff and visitors must be able to identify which schools have Wi-Fi by signage at the main entrance of the school. Any areas of the school where Wi-Fi is on throughout the school day must be clearly identified with visual signs for students, staff and visitors. Wi-Fi On/Off switches must be clearly labeled. A delineated map of the school routers and wireless lab and other network equipment and use locations must be prominently displayed in the main office and copies of this map provided to parents upon request to the Principal.

1. **Request Regular Monitoring of Radiation Levels**

The Board must monitor radiation levels semi-annually (or more often) and record all actual measurements on individual school websites. Measurements must be conducted by a trained, independent technician during periods of peak Wi-Fi utilization. The settings on the RF meters need to be on “Peak Mode” during the testing period. RMS or “Average” readings will not provide a good indication of signal strength for pulsed digital signals.

1. **Request Staff Training on Safer Use of Wireless Devices**

The Board must require a safety policy that ensures **all staff** are adequately trained in safer use of wireless devices (e.g., mobile phones, tablets, laptops, etc.). This training must include, but is not limited to, the safer use of wireless devices in keeping with the instruction manuals provided by the manufacturers and how to disable wireless networks (and other RF transmitters) on their wireless-enabled devices when not required for direct use. If the manufacturers operating instructions are not followed, the manufactures do not guarantee the safety of their device. The Board’s safety policy must be reviewed each school year with all staff.

1. **Request Emission Sources are at Maximum Distance and Minimum Output**

Location of the Wi-Fi routers in classroom settings must maximize the distance between routers and students (keeping in mind that physical barriers such as walls, ceilings and floors are not always barriers to emissions). Health Canada recommends that if you are interested in further reducing your exposure you can easily do so by reorienting antennas away from the user, placing the antennas at a greater distance than recommended, or lowering the transmitter output. Network equipment often has adjustable output and output must be as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA).

1. **Request SMCDSB Accommodate Sensitive Students in a Timely Manner**

Currently our schools are smoke-free and nut-free regardless of how small the minority in the population is affected. Environmental Sensitivities, including electro-hypersensitivity, is recognized as a disability under the Canadian Human Rights Code as well as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). As such, SMCDSB has a duty to accommodate children who experience environmental sensitivities. These accommodations must be in consultation with the Principal and parents to ensure equity of education for all students. SMCDSB must record the number of students for whom accommodations are requested and required and make this information available to Trustees for annual review. Full disclosure to staff and parents must be made available through the SMCDSB websites.

I look forward to receiving your personal reply to each of my above requests.

Sincerely,

cc. Mr. Clayton Ferguson, Board Chair of Trustees

Mrs. Maria Hardie, Vice Chair of Trustees