To: Kathi Wallace,

Director of Education

Simcoe County District School Board

1170 Highway 26 West

Midhurst, Ontario

L0L 1X0

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

Dear Kathi Wallace:

I am writing to let you know of my concerns regarding the use of WiFi in SCDSB schools which have been in place for the last several years. Due to uncertainty regarding the safety of WiFi technology in school settings, I am opposed to its use in Simcoe Public Schools. Until such time as WiFi is removed from SCDSB schools, and safer high speed internet technologies employed, I am making the following requests:

1. **Request SCDSB 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, SCDSB 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 SCDSB Health/Wellness and Safety Department and make findings publicly available on the SCDSB 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**

Many SCDSB schools had computer labs with internet cables hard wired to computers. These have been replaced with laptops on a cart that can be delivered to any classroom and wirelessly connected. The computer labs should be re-established or provide wired connections to every classroom. 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. Safer high speed technical solutions such as Ethernet connections, Powerline carrier adapters, or Beamcaster's optical links could be used to accommodate 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 SCDSB 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, SCDSB 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. SCDSB 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 SCDSB websites.

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

Sincerely,

cc.

Robert North, Board Chair of Trustees

Nicole Black, Vice Chair of Trustees