Dear Medical Officer of Health;

I am writing in response to an e-mail exchange we had back in Dec. 2010, regarding my concerns over the safety of installing Wi-Fi in schools, and the resultant exposure of children to continuous Radio-Frequency Radiation (RFR).

In past public statements, you have indicated that the World Health Organization (WHO) and Health Canada have concluded that RFR-emitting devices are safe.  You have explained that Health Canada's guidelines are developed using the latest available research, and re-iterated your faith in the ability of these two organizations to provide wise counsel on the safe use of this technology.

As I am sure you are aware, a lot has changed in the past two weeks.

On May 30/11, the WHO and the International Association for Research on Cancer (IARC) issued a new statement, based on their critical examination of the latest research:  In this statement, they have re-classified radio-frequency radiation (RFR).  Radiofrequency electromagnetic fields are now classified as "possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B)".  This places RFR in the same grouping with DDT, lead, and chloroform, none of which, I am sure we agree, should ever be part of any healthy school environment.

I am very familiar with the argument that Wi-Fi emits weaker signals than cell phones, but this is countered by the fact that children will be exposed to Wi-Fi continuously, for 1100 hours per year, vs. a few minutes at a time for exposure from a cell phone.  Also worth noting is that Jonathan Samet, the chairman of the IARC RF working group, stated that the 2B designation was not limited to cell phones, and that it has "broad applicability" to all sources of RF radiation.

Another member of the IARC working group is Dan Krewski, of the McLaughlin Centre for Population Health Risk Assessment at the University of Ottawa.  In your e-mail to me of Dec. 22/10, you advised me to watch videos by this "key scientist".   Dr. Krewski has traditionally downplayed the potential risks associated with RFR, yet after the WHO/IARC statement of May 31, he went on record to state:  “Once the IARC identifies an agent as possibly carcinogenic to humans, I don’t know if we want to wait for the final definitive science to accrue.  I think we should be a little bit careful.”

As per your suggestion, I also visited the Health Canada website (with which I am very familiar), but the site has yet to be updated to reflect this recent news, and the WHO's change in position.  I would hope that Health Canada, if it truly places the health of Canadians as its highest priority, will revisit Safety Code 6 (which is, incidentally, 100 - 1000 times less protective than the standards of many European countries) in a timely fashion.  In its present form, given this latest statement from the WHO/IARC, Safety Code 6 is simply inadequate.

Another point worth noting about Safety Code 6 is that it is only federal buildings and items under federal jurisdiction (eg. cell towers) are bound by it.  Schools, of course, fall under the province’s mandate, which means that while they cannot exceed Safety Code 6 levels, they are certainly permitted to set their own, more protective safety standards.  Given that children are universally recognized to be more sensitive to RFR than are adults, one could easily argue that schools should have stricter safety guidelines than federal buildings.

In summary, school boards and other public officials cannot continue to assure parents that Wi-Fi is safe: To do so would be disingenuous.   I respectfully suggest that the precautionary principle needs to be adopted, and school boards need to be compelled to stop installing Wi-Fi over the protests of parents.  I look forward to seeing our government act swiftly to protect the health of our most vulnerable citizens.

Yours very truly,