

Ministry of Education

Deputy Minister

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Memorandum To: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School
Authorities
Director, Provincial Schools Branch

From: George Zegarac
Deputy Minister

Date: April 24, 2014

Subject: *Student Injury Prevention Update*

Student health and safety is a priority focus for the Ministry of Education (EDU) and its education partners. I am writing today to address recent events regarding student injury prevention.

As you will recall, in May 2011, there was a student fatality in a school transportation technology class at the Ottawa Catholic District School Board (OCDSB). In response to this fatality, Ministry of Labour (MOL) health and safety inspectors conducted comprehensive, province-wide inspections of elementary school (grades 7 and 8) science and technology classrooms and secondary school technological education facilities and science laboratories to determine compliance with the requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations. The initial inspections took place between September 2011 and June 2012 and resulted in 6,658 orders (3.37 per visit) of non-compliance including 283 “stop work” orders.

In response to the serious nature of the orders identified by MOL, EDU provided \$9.9 million to school boards to assist in addressing the inspection results and board-specific health and safety concerns. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) was engaged to coordinate the initiative, address school board concerns and champion the development of a culture of safety-mindedness. CODE also developed a wide range of resources to support school boards and facilitated regional training sessions for school board teams. At the conclusion of the initiative, CODE developed a report entitled *A Report on the CODE Student Health and Safety in Schools Project*. The Executive Summary was distributed at the CODE CEO-CFO Conference in January. It includes a summary of the work completed and recommendations for future action.

During the fall of 2013, MOL conducted followup inspections to assess improvements in the rate of compliance by school boards with OHSA and its regulations. The results of the inspections are available on the MOL website at www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/ and indicate that 1,469 orders (3.22 per visit) of non-compliance, including 53 “stop work” orders, were issued. Proportionally, these results are not dissimilar to the results of the comprehensive 2011–12 inspection blitz.

The recent Coroner’s Inquest into the May 2011 student fatality at the OCDSB also resulted in recommendations intended to “prevent similar deaths in the future”. On April 3, 2014, the inquest jury released 22 recommendations directed to Ontario school boards, the Ontario Council for Technology Education, EDU, MOL and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

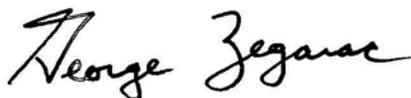
As an immediate next step, EDU will be working with school boards and other education partners to review all of the CODE and Inquest recommendations in order to formulate a comprehensive injury prevention strategy. As this work is being done, EDU will continue its support of the *Student Injury Prevention Initiative* by allocating \$3 million in additional funding to school boards. CODE will continue in its role of coordinator and will work with school boards to implement phase two.

School and system leaders have both a pivotal role and a legislative responsibility to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. With the understanding that the process of instilling a culture of safety-mindedness requires perseverance, I am confident that you will make every effort to uphold your obligations to ensure that this is an ongoing priority for you, your fellow school leaders and educators.

I would like to reinforce that student and staff injury prevention is a key underlying condition to student success and well-being. I appreciate your continued cooperation as we work in partnership to improve safety for all in Ontario schools.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact your Regional Office.

Sincerely,



George Zegarac
Deputy Minister

- c: Frank Kelly, Executive Director, CODE
Kathy Verdun, Director, Field Services Branch, EDU
Regional Office Managers, EDU