



Education and
Early Childhood
Development

Éducation et
Développement de la
petite enfance



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July 20, 2009

Mr. Bill Whelan, President
Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation Inc.
P. O. Box 1012
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7M4

Dear Mr. Whelan: *Bill:*

Further to your letter of April 28, 2009, I am pleased to provide the following responses to the various resolutions passed at your Annual General Meeting:

Resolution 1/09 - School Fees:

The Department is committed to eliminating all school fees relating to curriculum based equipment and supplies. I have provided direction to the Boards for the 2008/09 school year not to establish any new curriculum based user fees. To support this directive, funding was made available to Boards to begin the elimination of existing fees.

Resolution 2/09 - School Bus Safety: Student Numbers:

The Department is a strong supporter of school bus safety and works closely with the Boards to ensure that appropriate legislation and policies are in place to guide the daily activities. In the area of maximum numbers for travel on a particular bus we utilize standards established by national regulatory bodies. These standards are widely accepted across Canada. The Department is confident that through actively managing bus routes, any concerns over student numbers traveling on a particular route can be addressed.

Resolution 3/09 - Safe Schools:

The issue of cell phone use in schools continues to be a source of considerable contention. In my opinion, since the ban on cell phones was introduced in 2006, the population of students having access to and using a cell phone has increased to a point where students with cell phones greatly outnumber those without.

Your suggestion to involve parents in the discipline process is a good one. In response to the resolution, I commit to contacting school board staff and asking that they review the cell phone policy in light of your concerns.

Resolution 4/09 - School Closures:

At our meeting on May 22, 2009, you clarified that the intent of this resolution was that the implementation of any school closure decisions made in 2009 be delayed until 2010. As we discussed during our meeting, the existing School Closure Regulations do not permit a delayed implementation. The Department will be conducting a review of the school closure process to determine what changes may be warranted, to improve the process for the future.

Resolution 5/09 - Hand Washing:

The Department shares your concerns related to proper hand washing procedures. As you have noted, both the Eastern School District and the Western School Board have policies relating to hand washing prior to eating. Although it is the responsibility of the Boards to ensure that adequate time is made available to carry out this important task I support your efforts in calling attention to the issue. The Department worked with the Department of Health to circulate information on proper hand washing techniques to all schools. The Department of Health also offered hand washing clinics in schools.

Resolution 5/09 - Ban on Flavoured Tobacco Products:

As you know, my colleague, the Honourable Doug Currie, Minister of Health, is responsible for the *Smoke-Free Places Act*. I understand that the Department of Health has been working with Health Canada and Health Canada is taking action to ban the products.

In the education system, we are working diligently to provide students with information on the health risks of inappropriate substances like tobacco, as well as teaching refusal skills that students should use when confronted with these situations. Certainly, these products are of serious concern, and we see our role in the education system as the teaching of good decision-making skills.

Resolution 8/09 - One English Language School Board:

We had a fairly lengthy discussion of this resolution when we met on May 22, 2009. I understand that policy consistency and administrative efficiency are the primary initiating factors behind the resolution. Government is always open to new ideas and I look forward to hearing more from you once you begin to get feedback from local home and school associations.

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Resolution 9/09 - Exam Exemptions Pilot Project:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has contracted with the Faculty of Education at the University of Prince Edward Island to do an evaluation of this pilot project. There will be extensive interviews done with graduating students in 2009 who have had the experience of not having exam exemptions in their grade 10 year and then moving on to exam exemptions in their grade 11 and 12 years. There will also be a quantitative study of the data on attendance as well as other opportunities for consultation with teachers and parents.

The pilot does not conclude until June of 2010. This gives the team at UPEI some time to conclude their evaluation of the process. At that time the information will be shared with our stakeholders and we will look for further input from our stakeholders including the PEI Home and School Federation on whether this practice should continue.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss these topics with you when we meet this fall.

Sincerely,



Gerard Greenan
Minister