

September 4, 2009

Dear Peel District School Board Families:

Re: The law requires schools to report concerns regarding children who may be in need of protection

I am writing to share with you important information which affects the way our schools report concerns about children who may be in need of protection.

The Child and Family Services Act states that every person who has reason to believe that a child is or may be abused or neglected has a legal obligation to report his or her suspicions immediately to the Children's Aid Society. This law means that:

- **School staff do not have a choice if they suspect that a student is or may be in need of protection. They MUST report their suspicions to the Children's Aid Society.**
- When staff report concerns to Children's Aid, they must also share with Children's Aid any information about the concern which might otherwise be confidential.
- It is not the school's responsibility to investigate suspicions, evaluate the situation or assign blame.
- Staff can be fined \$1,000 for failing to report that a student is or may be in need of protection.

Our staff has a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and as such, has a legal responsibility to report any suspicions to Children's Aid. It is not necessary for staff to be sure that a student is or may be in need of protection. All that is needed is "reasonable grounds to suspect" abuse or neglect. "Reasonable grounds" is defined as being what the average person would suspect given his or her training, background and experience.

The Peel District School Board is fully committed to meeting the legal requirements of the *Child and Family Services Act*. Staff has the full support of the board in meeting this obligation. As a board, we must continue to protect the welfare of each student.

Sincerely,



Jim Grieve
Director of Education

