MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities

FROM: Ben Levin
Deputy Minister

DATE: August 21, 2006

SUBJECT: Rail Safety

I am writing to request your assistance in heightening your students’ awareness of rail-safety issues. This letter is prompted by the accidental death of Sabrina Latimer, aged 12, and the subsequent inquest and recommendations by a Coroner’s jury.

On February 17, 2005, as she walked home from school with a friend, Sabrina was struck and killed by the second of two trains that nearly simultaneously passed a CNR crossing in Brockville. Her death and the subsequent inquiry underline the importance of rail safety for all students in Ontario.

The Coroner’s jury examining Sabrina’s accidental death included recommendations that are very relevant to schools whose students cross railway tracks:

- A media blitz by local school boards, municipalities, and police services should be carried out at the beginning of each school year to focus on rail and road safety;

- School boards, in cooperation with police services, should ensure that Operation Lifesaver or an equivalent rail-safety instruction program is offered at the start of the school year;

- Schools should inform parents about rail safety throughout the year, by school newsletters and/or other means, to reinforce the importance of rail safety and to encourage parents to provide rail-safety education at home.

To further support the recommendations across the province, I encourage you all to use the following resources to remind students about rail safety.
• **Operation Lifesaver** [http://www.operationlifesaver.ca/](http://www.operationlifesaver.ca/) is a national public education program sponsored by the Railway Association of Canada and Transport Canada. Its website offers “presenters...trained and certified to provide important safety information to school children, community service clubs, civic groups, school bus operators, emergency service personnel, professional truck drivers, newly licensed drivers and others.” Contact: Roger Cameron <rogerc@railcan.ca>, 613-564-8097.

• **Safe Crossing Week** is October 23-27, 2006. It is sponsored by the Safe Crossing Program, which is run by CN with Safe Kids Canada and focuses on communities serviced by CN across the country. Kits and lesson plans are available for teachers of children aged 12 and under. The address of the web page for the Safe Crossing Program is: [http://www.sickkids.ca/SKCForPartners/section.asp?s=Safety+Information+by+Topic&sID=10772&ss=Rail%3A+Safe+Crossing+Program&ssID=11314](http://www.sickkids.ca/SKCForPartners/section.asp?s=Safety+Information+by+Topic&sID=10772&ss=Rail%3A+Safe+Crossing+Program&ssID=11314) Contact <safekids.web@sickkids.ca>. Call 1-888-723-3847.

• **SMARTRISK**, [http://www.smartrisk.ca/](http://www.smartrisk.ca/), a national non-profit organization dedicated to preventing injuries and saving lives, now has a rail-safety component aimed at secondary-level students. The Heroes program will send a speaker to schools in CN communities to talk about rail safety, as part of a general accident-prevention presentation. Eric St-Laurent is the Tour Coordinator; he can be contacted at <smartriskheroes@smartrisk.ca> or by phone at 416-596-2703.

• **Rail Safety Week** is April 23-29, 2007. The sponsor, the Railway Association of Canada, has audio and video public service announcements that are freely available to schools. Contact: Roger Cameron at <rogerc@railcan.ca>, 613-564-8097.

• **CN’s Safety Blitz** Ontario locations and dates for 2007 can be obtained from Gail Dever, at <gail.dever@cn.ca> (514-399-4698).

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. By working together, we hope to help reduce the occurrence of these tragic incidents in the future.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Ben Levin
Deputy Minister

c: Dr. Barry A. McLellan, Chief Coroner for Ontario