MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education, Supervisory Officers, Secretary Treasurers of School Authorities

FROM: Ben Levin
Deputy Minister

DATE: March 20, 2007

SUBJECT: Tipping hazard of folding tables

I am writing to request your help in heightening the awareness of your school staff on the use and storage of folding tables. This request is prompted by the accidental death of a student in a public school in Ontario.

As a result of this accidental death, and based on similar fatalities in other jurisdictions, the Chief Coroner for Ontario has issued the following recommendations regarding the use and storage of folding tables in schools:

1. Schools that use vertically stored wheeled folding tables should take steps to ensure that students who are not adult-sized (i.e. those in elementary school) do not have contact with or, specifically, move these tables except when the tables are fully deployed and stabilized.
2. As vertically stored wheeled folding tables represent a hazard even when stored (if a child has access to them and can climb on them), it is recommended that the tables either be restrained against an immovable object (e.g. chained above the midsection of the table to a wall) when stored or, more ideally, be secured in a room that is not accessible to children.
3. School boards should consider adopting a “systems-safety” approach to examining and, where appropriate, rectifying potential risks and hazards in the school environment. Engaging appropriately trained safety specialists may assist with the process.

To support these recommendations, I encourage all of you to take the opportunity to adopt a safety-first approach to all folding tables in elementary schools to avoid the possibility of another tragic incident.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Ben Levin

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