



Walkerton District Community School

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Learn Today.
Lead Tomorrow.

June 26, 2019

Re: Student smoking concern at WDCS

Dear Sonya,

Thank you for your letter regarding concerns about our students smoking in the Fisher Dairy Subdivision. We share your concerns about the safety of our students and about the inconvenience to the neighbours. Many of them have brought their concerns to us.

In our discussions with various neighbours it has become clear that very few people are aware of the additional pieces to the provincial legislation that came into effect on October 17th, 2018 when cannabis was legalized. At that time, as I'm sure you are aware because it impacts public buildings as well, there were changes to the Smoke Free Ontario Act, 2017, that altered what we are allowed to have happen at the school. Up until that time our students were required to be just off property if they were smoking. No one has been allowed to smoke on school property for quite a long time, but we were able to provide a space on our side of Hincks Street that we could monitor and that allowed us to ensure the safety of our students. We made sure there was a garbage pail and seating so students would stay there.

The October 17th changes mean that students, and everyone else, is required to be at least 20 metres from school property, as with any other public areas, such as parks and arenas. Someone walking by on the sidewalk could, theoretically, be charged as well.

For the fall and winter, and on into the spring, we spent our time educating the students and letting them know about the regulation changes, with warnings that they could be charged at any point. This spring there were charges laid against a number of students, mostly for smoking on school property, but at that point they did have to make the move to 20 metres from the school property. There is not a good place for them to go 20 metres from the school property. It does not work in any direction. It does not work for us and it does not work for the neighbours. Unfortunately, Fisher Dairy is safer than Cemetery Road and is much safer than Yonge Street. Cemetery Road would also have a greater impact on elementary students from both WDCS and St. Teresa.

Unfortunately, we do not have a good solution. We have brainstormed ideas and have come up with nothing more useful than where they are right now. We would be very open to having a discussion with the Municipality of Brockton and the South Bruce OPP to try to come up with a more workable solution. It might be helpful to also include our Tobacco Enforcement Officer, Miguelle Mann, in the discussion.

Thank you.

Sarah Slater
Principal, Walkerton District Community School