



Ontario Catholic teachers union issues Wi-Fi warning

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(QMI Agency file photo)

OTTAWA – Ontario's Catholic teachers' union is warning against teaching in classrooms with wireless Internet.

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, which represents 45,000 teachers, issued a research paper Monday highlighting some of their concerns surrounding Wi-Fi technology.

The union's call for a moratorium on wireless Internet follows a warning from the World Health Organization in May. The WHO's cancer arm called for more research into the potential dangers of Wi-Fi, noting all radiation from wireless devices could be carcinogenic.



"We do not know what the long-term effects of low-level non-ionizing radiation are on those who are exposed," the union's paper states. "No form of radiation can be deemed 'safe' as it depends on the constitution of the individual exposed, the amount of exposure as well as a sufficient amount of time to pass to observe any health effects that have a long latency period (i.e. cancer)."

The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, the provincial union representing elementary school teachers, is in the midst of looking at whether Wi-Fi is safe for schools.

A number of parents and teachers across Canada have been calling for wireless Internet to be removed from schools because they believe the technology is causing adverse health effects including headaches, nausea and muscle weakness.

Since the WHO ruling, QMI Agency has done a series of stories about concerns linked to wireless Internet technology.

In December 2011, Health Canada published an updated statement on its website about the potential risks of Wi-Fi.

"In 2011, the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified RF (Radio Frequency) energy as 'possibly carcinogenic to humans,'" the department's website states.

"The IARC classification of RF energy reflects the fact that some limited evidence exists that RF energy might be a risk factor for cancer. However, the vast majority of scientific research to date does not support a link between RF energy exposure and human cancers. At present, the evidence of a possible link between RF energy exposure and cancer risk is far from conclusive and more research is needed to clarify this 'possible' link."

Health Canada's website says the department agrees with the WHO that "more research in this area is warranted."

Some researchers, including Trent University's Magda Havas, have been pushing for the government to apply the "precautionary principle" until science can shed more light on the long-term impacts of the technology.

Havas said children absorb much more radiation than adults because their bodies are smaller and their skulls are thinner.

The Council of Europe said children in schools and classrooms should be given access to wired Internet connections, while some countries, including France, have banned Wi-Fi in libraries and similar spaces.

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