

April 23, 2019

Dear Superintendent Coombs

To be clear, our concern regarding the Youthline material is that it promotes high risk sexual behaviour that can lead to injury and serious health problems. Public Health Ontario's, Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee on Communicable Diseases, 2014 categorizes "Higher Risk Sexual Behaviour" as "Sexual practices that may cause bleeding or abrasions, resulting in blood-to-blood contact between participants. Examples may include unprotected anal intercourse, fisting, the use of sex toys, rough sex, . . ." ⁱ We feel that because this kind of high risk behaviour is promoted on Youthline, this site is not safe for any child or young person and so should not be accessible through the UCDSB website. By any reasonable standard, a web site that promotes high risk behaviour is inappropriate. We see no room for debate when it comes to the safety and well-being of our children.

We understand that Youthline is recognized by the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services and 'well established' with the school board's psychologists and staff members in positions of authority. No doubt, this contributes to a certain organizational inertia towards defending the 'educational value' of this site. As we know from the last provincial election, political mandates and ideologies do change but our responsibilities as adults to care for the safety of children and young people in our community remains.

Accountability is foundational for responsibility. Upper Canada District School Board's policy 301 states; "Use of digital communication must, like all other forms of communication, meet tests of credibility, privacy, authority and accountability." Youthline can be accessed without the school's, teacher's or parent's knowledge ⁱⁱ. A core concern regarding Youthline is the fact that no one is accountable for the 'advice' given to a young person by this site. You have not addressed our concern raised in our meeting on April 4, 2019 - there are parents, who because of their faith wish to be a part of any discussions regarding their child's gender. UCDSB by providing access to Youthline bypasses the rights of these parents. We find this in conflict with UCDSB's Equity and Inclusive Education Policy 454; "Accountability and Transparency - UCDSB will assess and monitor progress in implementing the equity and inclusive education strategy; to embed the principles into all UCDSB policies, programs, guidelines and practices; and to communicate these results to the community."

Further, you did not address our final concern we raised in relation to the school board's policy of Equity and Inclusive Education Policy 454 and Religious Accommodation Policy 451; what accommodations has the board provided that would allow a parent to opt out of having their child access Youthline through the school board's website? What guidelines are in place for teachers in the possible use of this material in the daily curriculum? In what grade levels should the Youthline

site be available? These are all relevant given the classroom ready nature of the materials available from Youthline that we reviewed with you.

To conclude, we find that our concerns are not resolved. Student safety has not been addressed. Also, the right of parents to be made aware of the decision making with regards to any advice and materials that their children may be exposed to through the classroom and school services has not been addressed.

We respectfully request that this matter be reviewed by the Director of Education in accordance with the Public Concerns Resolution Policy 340 and Procedure 341.1 sec. 1.3.

We further request of the Director that the link to the Youthline site be removed from the school board's website until the school board can demonstrate that 1) access to it is safe for children and young people and 2) can be made available in an age-appropriate way, 3) the parents of Upper Canada District School Board have been made aware of the nature of the material promoted by the Youthline website and its confidential (un-accountable) mode of operation and 4) a clear procedure for religious accommodation is made for parents who do not wish this website or any material promoted on it to be part of their child's daily classroom experience or work.

We look forward to hearing from the Director of Education regarding this matter.

Sincerely



Tony Kiar and David Bryan

ⁱ <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/recommendations-hepc-response.pdf?la=en>

ⁱⁱ "All of our services are confidential and anonymous. Our number will not show up on your phone bill. To learn how to prevent our site from showing up in your computer's history, click here." (<https://www.youthline.ca/get-support/ways-we-support/>)