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April 20, 2015

The Honourable Liz Sandals  
Minister of Education  
22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mowat Block  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Sandals,

At our recent CUPE Ontario School Board Coordinating Committee Conference, front line Office Clerical members detailed serious concerns with the implementation of school security systems that have now been installed in schools, across Ontario.

Attached, you will find information compiled by a couple of those CUPE Ontario members for forwarding to your Ministry for consideration and action. Clearly, the issues outlined by these members, in their own words, including the lack of consultation with front line staff prior to implementation, the inconsistency of implementation and the lack of comprehensive training for these new school security systems are troubling.

Minister, the safety of our schools is of paramount concern to CUPE Ontario members. The students we serve and our school communities deserve to know security systems like these are effective, thoroughly implemented and properly resourced.

CUPE Ontario would very much like to facilitate a meeting between staff from your Ministry and the front line CUPE Ontario office clerical members who can detail in full the security, workload and health and safety concerns with these security systems.

Wynne Hartviksen, from my office would be happy to work with your staff to facilitate this meeting and can be contacted at [whartviksen@cupe.on.ca](mailto:whartviksen@cupe.on.ca) or at 905-739-9739.

We look forward to working with your Ministry on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Hahn".

Fred Hahn  
CUPE Ontario President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terri Preston".

Terri Preston  
Chair of CUPE Ontario School Board  
Coordinating Committee

Cope 343

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Fred Hahn  
President

ONE STRONG VOICE

Candace Rennick  
Secretary-Treasurer

Liz Sandals, Minister of Education  
Ministry of Education  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Mowat Block  
900 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Sandals,

**Re: School Security Monitor System**

We are writing to you on behalf of the Office Clerical Education Workers regarding implementation, as well as Health and Safety concerns, pertaining to the School Security Monitor System.

Attached, for your perusal, are the issues/concerns front-line office clerical education workers detailed regarding the implementation of the school security systems, installed in schools across Ontario. Also attached, you will see a resignation letter and a letter from a school secretary who went through a security situation at her site.

These systems have now become a serious, additional stressor in the school office environment. Members have expressed they are the cause of mental health issues, physical health issues (repetitive work strain), noise issues and unnecessarily increased workloads. Office staff was not hired or trained as security guards, however it now seems to be the case they are fulfilling that role as well. The treadmill in school offices across the province seems to have been turned up another several notches.

As it is now used, we do not feel this is a system that offers any security to our schools. We have attached a list of reasons why this system needs to be removed immediately or at the very least properly implemented with additional full time personnel, properly trained in security.

This system is currently offering a "false sense of security" in our schools and is not at all effective.

Sincerely

Anne Postill  
School Office Administrative Professional  
Elementary School  
Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB  
Secretary-Treasurer  
CUPE Local 5555

Cathryn Rousseau  
Elementary School Head Secretary  
Durham District School Board  
Office, Clerical, Technical Chairperson,  
CUPE Local 218

## School Office Security Monitor System Concerns & The Impact on School Office Employees

- A general guideline for implementation and use of these systems has not been sent out. Since school office administration staff are responsible for implementing the system, consultation previous to installation and provision of consistent guidelines would have been appropriate.
- School office administration staff do not have security guard or police training
- Security system is giving a “false sense of security” for the community/public
- This system leaves the school office administration staff vulnerable and feeling fully responsible for any mishap/misfortune
- The legalities and liabilities potentially facing individual school office administration staff operating the system have not been addressed, causing stress over having to make the decision to open that door
- There are serious issues with the accessibility of the system for disabled staff members, in particular hearing impaired workers.
- The system is very disruptive and is certainly adding on to time frames for the completion of regular duties
- The buzzer/ringer adds a new dimension of frustration in the school office environment. A new dimension to the word ‘Rush’
- It is impossible to take the time to greet and ask why, who, when etc. and still maintain focus on, and perform the regular office duties
- Monitors were to be installed in main office and the Principal’s office. Many Principals across the province have refused and will not use or assist with the system
- Schools with portables require keys for entry to the school. This system does nothing to protect against entry by key, which students often require to use in school facilities like bathrooms.
- Students should NOT be in the office answering the door or phones. This is potentially a disaster waiting to happen and yet was reported by a number of workers.
- Anger issues with parents as they can’t get in quick enough, leading to other potential safety issues
- Protocols are required for one-school secretaries so they can take their lunch and breaks as per labour law
- Many are feeling devalued with this added responsibility, in already over-taxed positions and are now being held responsible for security entry to the school
- Running the school office has always been a multi-tasking environment. It has now become an exercise in frustration, with a constantly ringing buzzer as the soundtrack.
- Feedback indicates that on average, the door can be unlocked as many as 100 times per day. Schools with daycares add to the number of entries throughout the day. Traffic is constant starting daily with late students, then sign outs throughout the day, and to complete the circle, on average the last 35 minutes of the day are spent with parents signing out their children to avoid waiting at the end of the day

### Health & Safety issues such as.....

- Stress, fatigue, headaches from the constant ringing/buzzing, anxiety attacks
- The constant noise from the security system adds to the already existing noises; ie. PA, walkies, phone, etc.
- Sore arm, shoulder and neck causing repetitive muscle strain from the constant reaching for the buzzer
- Illness due to not having proper lunch breaks and bathroom breaks
- Low Level, continuous noise = Insidious Stressor
- Continual exposure to unpleasant noise can cause bad moods, lack of concentration, poor work performance