



Statement – Death of a Retired TDSB Principal

July 21, 2023

We are deeply saddened and disturbed by the death of Richard Bilkszto, a retired principal with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) extends sincere condolences to his family, as well as students, administrators, staff and families within our school communities, who are directly impacted by this. We encourage you to seek support when and if needed.

The health and wellness of principals and vice-principals across Ontario continues to be a priority for the OPC. Increased supports from school boards and the government are essential to ensure the health and safety of educators as they work to provide supportive and safe learning environments for students in Ontario's public schools.

Employers have an obligation to provide a safe working environment and to protect their staff from bullying and harassment, including from external service providers. As was determined by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the TDSB failed to do so for Mr. Bilkszto. We are deeply concerned about the potential for this type of harm to occur to other educators. All efforts must be made to prevent this from ever happening again.

The OPC provides support and guidance to OPC Members. Members and their families have access to the [Starling Minds](#) program for personal support at no cost to them. As well, the OPC provides professional learning related to all aspects of the role of administrators, including equity and anti-oppression, led by experienced educators and school leaders.

There are many systemic patterns and practices in schools that continue to create barriers for some students and staff, usually those that are traditionally underrepresented and under-served. As a result, ongoing equity, diversity and inclusion training for administrators and all school staff is important. Training sessions need to take an approach that is grounded in humility, empathy and honours the humanity of participants. This includes opportunities for participation and open discussion, without fear of reprisal. We all have more learning and unlearning to do.