

From: [Watt, Heather \(MOH\)](#)
To: [Kann, Travis \(OPO\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: Statement on Furey Article
Date: January 26, 2021 8:51:06 PM

Carly is tweaking a bit and will send back around.

Heather Watt
Chief of Staff, Hon. Christine Elliott
647.205.4305

From: Adalsteinn Brown <adalsteinn.brown@utoronto.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 20:28
To: Watt, Heather (MOH)
Subject: Re: Statement on Furey Article

CAUTION -- EXTERNAL E-MAIL - Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender.

Thanks Heather

Three quick thoughts:

1. I would wonder whether you wanted to worry about potential conflicts across all of the groups that provide advice. We're the only ones that disclose as far as I know and I honestly don't know what you would find if you looked at conflicts across all of the groups.
2. I am also not sure that we have given you advice formally on school closures. I think – although I could also take a look through the decks if you want me to – that we have given you advice about testing in schools (a good idea) and cohorting in schools (a good idea). I think the first formal piece of advice you'll get from us is this week where we will show that Schools could actually open. In our decks where we have talked about lock-downs we've made it clear that schools were not necessarily closed.
3. Finally, there are a number of places where you don't follow the advice we give and that's really ok. The government has to make decisions, we just give you evidence that you have to weigh against any number of other inputs that have as much validity to the policy-making process. There's no direct line between David working for EFTO, us giving you advice to close Schools, and you following it. I would avoid anything that gives credence to that as it makes it sound like there is no distance between you and the advisory groups and that it is one person who can overwhelm dozens of other scientists so it tarnishes all of the other scientists who have given their time. Perhaps you want to note that he is merely one of dozens of scientists working on a volunteer basis and that he does not speak for the group in his work for EFTO.

I can live with the language if you need to put that out there.

Best

From: Watt, Heather (MOH) <H.Watt@ontario.ca>
Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 7:50 PM

To: Adalsteinn Brown <adalsteinn.brown@utoronto.ca>

Subject: Re: Statement on Furey Article

EXTERNAL EMAIL:

I think that part is TBD. s. 13

What about “sought a resolution to ensure potential conflicts are disclosed and addressed, either through screens or another appropriate process.”

s. 13

Open to suggestions on language -

Heather Watt
Chief of Staff, Hon. Christine Elliott
647.205.4305

From: Adalsteinn Brown <adalsteinn.brown@utoronto.ca>

Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 19:43

To: Watt, Heather (MOH)

Subject: Re: Statement on Furey Article

CAUTION -- EXTERNAL E-MAIL - Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender.

Thanks Heather

What does the expression “sought a resolution to ensure clear conflict of interest screens are in place” mean?” I think all of the rest makes sense to me, but that phrase worries me a lot.

Best

Steini

From: Watt, Heather (MOH) <H.Watt@ontario.ca>

Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 7:40 PM

To: Adalsteinn Brown <adalsteinn.brown@utoronto.ca>

Subject: Statement on Furey Article

EXTERNAL EMAIL:

Hi Steini,

Thanks for taking my call earlier. We are being asked by media to respond, but I think we have found a reasonable landing position that addresses the issue.

Can you let me know if you have any major concerns with this statement?

Thanks,
Heather

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“The news about Dr. Fisman is deeply concerning. Unfortunately, we learned about this matter through the media. Neither the Premier nor his cabinet were aware of this potential conflict.

Ontarians have put their trust in us to make difficult decisions based on sound, impartial public health advice. Our expectation is that anyone advising the government in this capacity would do so absent of agenda or bias, and therefore this paid relationship raises legitimate concerns.

While the COVID-19 Science Advisory Table is an independent voluntary group of experts that advises the government on matters of critical importance, we have sought a resolution to ensure clear conflict of interest screens are in place.

The overwhelming evidence shows our government’s return to school plan is safe. This has been confirmed by a wide range of public health officials, including members of the COVID-19 Science Advisory Table.

We will continue to work in the best interests of all Ontarians, including parents, students, and educators. By working together, we will bend this curve, and we will put an end to this virus.”

Heather Watt
Chief of Staff
Hon. Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier & Minister of Health

m. 647.205.4305