



It starts with Scouts.

**Tout commence
avec les Scouts.**

**Scouts Canada
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Please view the accompanying video message at: <http://youtu.be/DM-TjMqz9IE>.

December 8, 2011

Dear Parents, Scouters, Partners and Supporters:

For 104 years, Scouts Canada has been committed to the healthy development of young people in every community across our country. Children and youth in Scouts gain invaluable experiences and skills that help them develop into capable, confident and well-rounded individuals who are better prepared for success in the world.

For these same reasons, nothing is more important than the wellbeing of the children and youth with whom we work so closely and whose lives we seek to influence for the better. Their safety and health is a solemn obligation that we do our best to meet with great care and concern. That is why we strive to ensure that our child and youth protection policies are the most rigorous of any youth services organization in the country. Today, more than ever, great care is necessary to ensure the children and youth in Scouting are protected from those who would do harm, and “vigilance” is our watchword.

In recent weeks, our children and youth protection policies – both current and past – have come under significant media scrutiny, and Scouts Canada has been direct and forthright when responding to the media’s questions. Although sometimes challenging, this scrutiny has also given us the opportunity to take a wider look at our full range of youth protection programs and policies. It has also led us to reflect on past examples of wrongdoing by those who have violated their obligations to our movement and to the youth entrusted to their care.

We want Scouts, their parents and the public to know the full extent of our commitment to providing a safe and nurturing environment. And we want them to know our commitment is complete and heartfelt. Therefore, the Board of Governors has asked me to share the following actions with all of you.

First and most important, Scouts Canada, and I personally, wish to apologize sincerely and deeply to any and all former Scouts who suffered harm at the hands of those who abused the trust and responsibility they had gained as volunteer Leaders in our movement. Our sincere efforts to prevent such crimes have not always succeeded and we are sorry for that and saddened at any resulting harm. Our most profound sympathies extend to all victims and their families.



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Second, as we have said many times publicly, Scouts Canada has a very strict policy with respect to reporting allegations of abuse:

- We suspend the Leader in question immediately to ensure there is no further contact with children and youth;
- We refer the matter in full to police and child protection services. We cooperate completely with the police in their investigations;
- Any information that Scouts Canada obtains relating to abuse allegations is communicated to police.

To our knowledge, there has not been deviation from this policy by Scouts Canada. Nevertheless, we want the public to have complete confidence that every record of abuse has been handled properly and shared with police. To this end, we have asked KPMG's Forensic group to conduct a thorough, arms-length review of all records held by Scouts Canada on Leader suspensions or terminations that are related to abuse. We will confirm the integrity of our process and ensure that no exceptions to our approach exist – even in historical examples. This work should be completed by early in the New Year and we will make the results of KPMG's examination public.

Third, we also want to ensure that our child and youth protection policies continue to set the highest possible standard. Therefore, we have asked Peter Dudding, CEO of the Child Welfare League of Canada to lead a third-party panel of experts in child and youth protection and safety. The panel will conduct a thorough and complete review of all our policies and procedures, and make recommendations on any additional measures that ensure they meet today's realities, and, to the best of our ability, that they anticipate the needs of tomorrow. The Panel's mandate will extend beyond advising on our child and youth protection policies to provide guidance on our training methods, curriculum and in-the-field implementation. Scouts Canada's commitment to the panel is ongoing and long-term and reaffirms our efforts towards continuous enhancement of our youth protection policies and procedures. We want to be certain that we are taking every possible action, now and in the future. We are also committed to sharing the findings of this review with all other youth services organizations in Canada.



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In closing, we want parents and the public to know that as an organization and as individual Scouters, we are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for their children. At our core, Scouts is about helping young people find their way forward, equipping them with the tools, abilities and self-esteem they need to be self-confident today – and leaders in their own communities tomorrow. It has been our mission for 104 years, and it is one we will continue to pursue with humility, energy and vigilance.

Yours in Scouting,

Steve Kent

Chief Commissioner and Chair of the Board of Governors
Scouts Canada