

French Senate wants cellphone ban for kids

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CBC News

France's Senate wants to forbid children in primary and middle schools from using cellphones, amending a sweeping environment bill to include such a ban.

Senators added a line this week about cellphones to an article of the bill on exposure to communications equipment "posing a risk to health."

The measure would ban pupils up through about age 14 from using cellphones in school. It also approved a measure banning cellphone advertising that targets children under 14.

The changes would need approval by the lower house of parliament, the National Assembly. Both houses are dominated by President Nicolas Sarkozy's party UMP.

A poll published Tuesday says many French pupils use cellphones in class even when school rules forbid it.

An investigation by CBC's Marketplace last year found experts who raised concerns that excessive cellphone use was not safe for children. Studies have found cellphone signals penetrate farther in the brains of children.

In July 2008, Toronto's department of public health issued an advisory that teenagers and young children to limit their use of cellphones to avoid potential health risks.

The advisory — believed to be the first of its kind in Canada — warned that because of possible side effects from radio frequencies, children under eight should only use a cellphone in emergencies and teenagers should limit calls to less than 10 minutes.

"Teach them the ways to use a cellphone responsibly — to make shorter calls, to use other modes of communication; if it's possible, use a landline," said Loren Vanderlinden, a health department supervisor and the report's author.

The Marketplace survey of 1,084 kids between the ages of nine and 13 across Canada found that just under 40 per cent of kids had their own cellphone. The average age of when they got their first cellphone was 10.5.

Only 7.5 per cent said they used a headset with their cellphone.

<http://www.cbc.ca/consumer/story/2009/10/08/france-cellphone-ban.html>