

April 16, 2015

The Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender:

Subject: Emergency Preparedness Grant for Parent Advisory Councils

The Provincial Emergency Program actively encourages and promotes all school districts to proactively enhance emergency management in BC. The Provincial Emergency Program encourages schools, school boards and school communities to adopt six principles (comprehensive, risk based, multi-hazard, incident command system, volunteerism, and community partnerships) to advance safety and emergency preparedness for staff and students. There is no direct funding support to school districts from either the Provincial Emergency Program or local municipalities to assist in developing comprehensive multi-hazard emergency management planning.

North Vancouver and West Vancouver are recognized as leaders in school emergency management and both School Districts have self-funded the development of an all-hazards approach to their emergency plan as there is no targeted funding in place for the development of emergency management. The Ministry of Education continues to implement its structural seismic upgrading program to seismically upgrade schools that have been assessed for upgrades; however, this program is not comprehensive and only addresses a single hazard. For example, all staff must know what the basic response actions and procedures would be for the safety and protection of students in other emergency situations, including lockdowns.

An integral part of planning requires emergency supplies, food, water and storage on site. Parent Advisory Councils have been raising funds to meet these needs. Some schools do not have the same ability to fundraise as other schools, creating inequity among schools to have these supplies as well as other unmet needs within North Vancouver School District schools.

The Board recognizes that there are some materials/resources for families and communities on the Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) website but want to urge the Ministry of Education to take the lead on behalf schools in BC and work collaboratively with EMBC and the Ministry of Justice to ensure that not only are the Districts school buildings safe, but that there is a consistent approach throughout the province in the development of guidelines and standards for any emergency, incident or disaster at a school.

These standards and guidelines should establish a minimum standard for schools that will ensure the safety of students and staff and be inclusive of children with complex needs; physical needs, mental health issues and medical needs.

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Letter to Minister Fassbender
Emergency Preparedness Grant
April 16, 2015
Page 2 of 2

The North Vancouver Board of Education would like to take this opportunity to address the standards for emergency preparedness by asking the Ministry to provide a one-time equity grant to all Parent Advisory Councils to meet these guidelines.

Should you have any questions related to this request, please contact me at 604.831.6608 or cgerlach@sd44.ca.

Yours truly,
NORTH VANCOUVER BOARD OF EDUCATION



Cyndi Gerlach
Chair

cc Board of Education, School District No. 44 (North Vancouver)
John Lewis, Superintendent of Schools
Georgia Allison, Secretary Treasurer & CFO
All Boards of Education (via BCSTA)

