PAC news

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P.A.C.

École Puntledge Park – SD71

A School for Everyone – Une École pour tout le monde!

December 17, 2009

Ms. Ellie Meertens, Chair
Comox Valley Parents' Advisory Council
School District 71 (Comox Valley)

Re: Flooding and School Closures on November 16, 2009

Ecole Puntledge Park Elementary PAC, especially those members who have been working on Emergency Preparedness (EP) at Puntledge for the past 6 years, would like to address the heavy flooding that occurred on Monday, November 16, 2009 and its implications for emergency preparedness at SD71 schools. In doing so, our hope is that this experience becomes a catalyst for improving SD71 emergency response plans to enhance child safety.

The November 2009 flood, declared a State of Emergency in the Comox Valley, and the resulting bridge and school closures had a significant impact on Ecole Puntledge Park Elementary and on any families whose children were separated from their homes and parents by river crossings.

First and foremost, Puntledge PAC wishes to thank and acknowledge all the teachers, administrators, executives, students and others who pulled together to get Puntledge students safely to other side of the river to connect with their parents. The dedicated effort and teamwork involved was tremendous, and we're most appreciative of how everyone responded to this challenge.

In retrospect, it is important for all District parents to seriously consider what you would do in a similar situation – especially if you were out of contact range when an incident or disaster happened. The scenario could be as simple as a power outage or severe snowstorm or, heaven forbid, an earthquake. The bridges and roads may be impassable; communication systems may be down. What are your family plans? Who will pick up your children or ensure they make it safely

home? Are the staff at your school adequately prepared to handle the diverse emergency situations that may arise?

Ecole Puntledge Park undoubtedly faces the most complicated emergency scenarios, as we have elementary-aged students enrolled from all over the district in our French Immersion, Late French Immersion, and Aboriginal Education Programs, making it

necessary for them to travel considerable distances and cross bridges to access school. There are over 500 students at Puntledge School and approximately 250 are in French Immersion. On November 16th, approximately 80 students were identified as living on the far side of the bridge. Due to severe flooding, 50 students were evacuated by bus to Queneesh School and the remaining students were picked up by their parents before 1:30pm when all the District schools closed.

November 16 was a very mild emergency that developed relatively slowly and predictably, providing a perfect opportunity to learn valuable lessons and improve our plans for responding to the type of hazards (including floods, fires, severe storms, power outages, earthquakes) that can impact the Comox Valley. Working together, the school community can develop a solid foundation of emergency preparedness plans that will truly safeguard our children when they most need it.

With this in mind, we' d like to recommend that the 8 points below be presented to the Superintendent and the School Board for action:

1. Request a **Ministerial Order** to clarify who is obligated for the care of unaccompanied minors (or school children) after an emergency has been declared.

   This request is brought to your attention because School District 71 Policy 3040, point #7 states the following:

   - " assumption of control of the situation by members of the Comox Valley Operations Centre or other community groups such as fire and/or police;
   - replacement by neighbourhood volunteers where the principal and/or site supervisor believes the safety of students is reasonably assured;
   - assumption of control by emergency social services;

- release of students to their parents/guardians/designated where the principal and/or site supervisor believes that the safety of students has been reasonably assured;
- where the superintendent of schools or his/her designate announces such action for individual schools/sites or all schools/sites."

On January 2, 2007, Emergency Social Services (ESS) advised Ecole Puntledge Park Elementary Emergency Preparedness Representative (Kelly Broom) that they will not accept unaccompanied minors. They now recommend that these children remain in the care of their school, or be evacuated to another school if necessary.

This contradicts the current School District 71 Emergency Preparedness plan – that unattended children will be handed over to ESS for care. Accordingly, most schools in the District are unprepared to care for children beyond the initial plan to relocate outside to the school playing field and await pickup by parents. Hence, no plans have been developed (ie. food, water, shelter, first aid) for children whose parents are unable to make it to the school. In the event of an earthquake or similar event, this clearly leaves serious gaps.

Clarity regarding this responsibility is requested because there are four different ministries that have been identified for this potential obligation. They are:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General for (Provincial Emergency Program and Emergency Social Services)
- Ministry of Children & Family Development
- Ministry of Labour & Citizens' Services (Worksafe BC and Workers Compensation Act)

In the absence of clarity regarding who is legally obligated to care for school children during and after an emergency, we would like to recommend following the procedures, as outlined in the North Shore Emergency Preparedness Manual. This manual has been endorsed by the Provincial Emergency Program and the Justice Institute of BC and follows the Incident Command System that all BC First Responders use.

In the absence of a Ministerial Order, local school boards should step in to fill this void through leadership and financial assistance for the schools under their care.

The following School District 71 policies support this request:
SD71 – 3040 – Emergency Preparedness and Response (Appendix 3)
SD71 – 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response - Earthquake (Appendix 4)
SD71 – 3016R2 – Criminal Record Search – Volunteers (Appendix 6)
SD71 – 6022 – Protection of Pupils and the Maintenance of Order (Appendix 7)

2. Request a comprehensive **Hazard Assessment** for each school in the District.

This would identify all hazards for each school, such as forest fires, floods, liquefaction, highway hazards, airplane crashes, etc. Each school is evaluated according to the particulars of its student body, geography, and other factors that relate to specific hazards to that school. Such an Assessment is the necessary foundation for each school' s evacuation and preparedness plans. Mike Fournier with the Comox Valley Emergency Program would be able to help the district facilitate this. Mr. Fournier has a report that identifies all the hazards for the Valley.

The following School District 71 policies support this request:
SD71 3040 – Emergency Preparedness and Response (Appendix 3)
SD71 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response - Earthquake (Appendix 4)

3. Perform **annual drills** (already outlined in SD71 Emergency Preparedness Manual in section 9, pages 1-23). The standard drill (to relocate outside and wait for pickup) should be expanded to included site evacuation, first aid and other related procedures when the Hazard Assessment indicates the need.

Practising drills brings comfort and competency when everyone knows what they need to do in an emergency. This familiarity will be especially beneficial in the event the usual communication systems fail (phone, cell phone, internet, etc.)

The following WCB regulation and School District 71 policies support this request:

WCB 4.13 (1&2) Risk assessment issued September 1999 (Appendix 2)
SD71 3040 – Emergency Preparedness and Response (Appendix 3)
SD71 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response – Earthquake (Appendix 4)
SD71 3016R2 – Criminal Record Search – Volunteers (Appendix 6)
SD71 6022 – Protection of Pupils and the Maintenance of Order (Appendix 7)

4. Identify & practice **alternate communications** for if or when telephones, cell phones and internet fail during an emergency (ie Radio Phones for schools to communicate with other authorities, and walkie talkies for short-range school use etc.)

   How would a school contact the Board Offices, emergency services, or others about a problem if the phones are not working? This problem becomes serious if time is critical. Statistics show that communications systems are extremely vulnerable during severe weather events and earthquakes, and communications breakdowns are typically one of the difficulties which complicate emergency responses, so it is wise to prepare for the eventuality that telephones, cell phones, and computers may not be functioning during an emergency.

   The following WCB regulation and School District 71 policies support this request:
   WCB 4.13 (1&2) Risk assessment issued September 1999 (Appendix 2)
   SD71 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response - Earthquake (Appendix 4)
   SD71 6022 – Protection of Pupils and the Maintenance of Order (Appendix 7)

5. Recommend purchasing the **North Shore Emergency Preparedness Manual** developed for SD 44 and 45.

   Paul Berry, Brooklyn Principal, is familiar with this excellent manual. It focuses on an all-hazards approach to emergency management – all types and levels of emergencies – for floods, fires, severe stores including power outages, earthquakes etc. It is clear and easy to read with many illustrations, checklists and reproducible letters for individual school use. This manual is recommended as it is more comprehensive & easier to use than the current SD71 Emergency Preparedness Manual (written in 1999). Puntledge School purchased the manual in 2006 and the PAC Emergency Committee highly recommends it.

The following School District 71 policies support this request:

SD71 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response-Earthquake (Appendix 4)

SD71 3016R2 – Criminal Record Search – Volunteers (Appendix 6)

SD71 6022 – Protection of Pupils and the Maintenance of Order (Appendix 7)

6. Invite **Bernadette Woit** to do an introduction to our Board or District.

Bernadette is the President of Emergency Social Services Association and is the School Emergency Preparedness Coordinator with the North Shore Emergency Management Office for SD 45. She has an enormous amount of experience in this area, and could add much valuable input in terms of reviewing emergency response plans, training sessions for staff, train the trainer sessions, practice drills (including but not limited to student release).

The following School District 71 policy supports this request:

SD71 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response – Earthquake (Appendix 4)

7. Recommend the district **form a SD71 Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee** (similar to FAC) that includes representatives and stakeholder groups from all schools to attend regular meetings to help develop district-wide emergency preparedness plans.

The committee could include school principals, district maintenance staff, teachers, parents, trustees, and senior grade students. The committee may also recruit experts from the community, either as committee members or as resource persons, for example: local fire, police and emergency officials, Red Cross or St. John' s Ambulance personnel, doctors, communication experts, etc. After the committee has defined its objectives, the district committee may delegate tasks to individual school principals or district staff, for example: implementation of drills, staff training programs, identification of hazards, preparation of local response plan and communication plan.

The following School District 71 policies support this request:

SD71 3040 – Emergency Preparedness and Response (Appendix 3)

SD71 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response-Earthquake (Appendix 4)

SD71 3016R2 – Criminal Record Search – Volunteers (Appendix 6)

SD71 6022 – Protection of Pupils and the Maintenance of Order (Appendix 7)

8. Request support for a **financial plan** to purchase supplies for each school so there is equity and fairness for all schools as part of the district emergency preparedness plan and there are no have or have-not schools. Advocate for (but do not defer district action while waiting for) provincial or other funds to support these Emergency Preparedness initiatives.

   The suggested plan, shown in Appendix 1, could include annual funding to purchase emergency supplies over a 3-year period and thereby bring SD71 EP plans up to the recommended 72 hour preparedness standard. Each year, the items would be inventoried to ensure they are in working order (such as flashlights) and not out of date (as in water and food supplies). After the items have been inventoried, the school district could submit an order for new supplies and or replacements and take advantage of bulk purchases at a lower price.

   The following School District 71 policy supports this request:
   SD71 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response - Earthquake (Appendix 4)

We all know what we want for our children and their teachers: we would like them to be prepared and safe in an emergency. This requires sufficient pre-planning and training. How can schools cope under the pressure of an emergency unless they have been equipped with the necessary information, tools, funding and practice opportunities? Our children' s safety depends on schools being well prepared to deal with a range of emergencies, and the Nov 16th flooding incident has highlighted key areas where plans and procedures need improvement.

Thank you for considering these concerns and suggestions, and we look forward to working with the DPAC and the School District to develop the district-wide emergency preparedness plans.

Sincerely,

Gaylene Rehwald, PAC Chair, Ecole Puntledge Park Elementary
Kelly Broom, PAC Emergency Preparedness, EPPE

c/o Ecole Puntledge Park Elementary

401 Willemar Avenue
Courtenay, BC
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CC: Jordan Tinney
Clyde Woolman
Martin Hartig

Attached:

Acknowledgements
Areas for Followup & Consideration
Supporting documents & photos
Appendix 1 - SD71 Emergency Preparedness Suggested Plan
Appendix 2 – WCB Regulation 4.13 – Emergency Preparedness and Response, Risk Assessment, page 1
Appendix 3 – SD71 Policy 3040 – Emergency Preparedness and Response
Appendix 4 – SD71 Policy 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response – Earthquake
Appendix 5 – SD71 Policy 3041MR3 – First Aid
Appendix 6 – SD71 Policy 3016R2 – Criminal Record Search – Volunteers
Appendix 7 – SD71 Policy 6022 – Protection of Pupils and the Maintenance of Order

Acknowledgements

- Emergency Program Act, Declaration of State of Emergency, (http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/freeside/-- E --/Emergency Program Act RSBC 1996 c. 111/00_96111_01.xml)

- School Earthquake Safety Guidebook (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/capitalplanning/resources/schoolearthquakesafetyguidebook.pdf)

  The purpose of the *School Earthquake Safety Guidebook* [PDF] is to assist school district staff, teachers, parents, and students to make their schools safer. Prepared for schools by the Ministry of Education Capital Planning Branch (December 2000 edition, pdf format).

- Principles to Advance Emergency Management in Schools (http://www.pep.bc.ca/schools/Schools_Resolution_to_Advance_Emergency_Management.pdf)

  The *Endorsement of Six Principles to Advance Emergency Management in British Columbia Schools* [PDF] outlines six key principles to help schools be better

- Responding to Critical Incidents: A Resource for Schools (RB0071) (PDF, 259KB) (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resourcedocs/critinc.pdf)

  Intended to assist schools and school districts in planning effective responses after traumatic events. It contains a generic protocol for supporting staff and students dealing with emotional issues after a critical incident, violent event, natural disaster, or other traumatic event. As well, this resource includes useful material on Critical Incidents Stress Debriefing, including: Developing a critical incidents response plan; communication guidelines; and team/teacher/school checklists and agendas.

- Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools: A Guide (PDF, 2.7MB) (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/guide/scoguide.pdf)

This document describes the vision for schools toward which school boards, schools and school communities must continually strive. The Guide identifies attributes of safe, caring and orderly schools, and provides provincial standards for codes of conduct. It also outlines strategies for informing appropriate members of the school community of safety concerns in a timely manner.

Appendix E: Guiding Legislation

This appendix provides excerpts from legislation that is relevant to the development and review of policy, procedures and practices related to maintaining safe, caring and orderly schools.

1. *Constitution Act*
   a. *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
   b. *Rights of Aboriginal Peoples*
2. *Multiculturalism Act*
3. *BC Human Rights Code*
4. *Official Languages Act*
5. *Youth Criminal Justice Act*
6. *School Act (British Columbia),*
Statement of Education Policy Order, School Regulation
7. *Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order*

- Emergency Management for North Shore Schools Manual

  A guide prepared for School Districts 44 and 45.

- BC School Act Ministerial Orders
  (http://hiderefer.com/?http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/e.htm)

- Items of Interest Binder given to SD71 EP Representative on March 10, 2009 which contained the following items:

  - Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation, dated September 8, 1995

- The Safe Schools Charter dated 2004

Areas for Follow up and/or Consideration

- Any school that has cross boundary students should be part of the district-wide emergency preparedness evacuation plans.
- Can BCeSIS identify where children live, and can that information be easily extracted?
- Can an alternate system or protocol be created to help Administrators access key information in the event that computers go down (ie. where children live, parent contact info, and info for authorized Guardians if a parent cannot be reached etc)? Standardized print forms would be useful, so each administrator does not have to invent a own version.
- How will SD Executives notify schools of changing plans during an emergency? Phone lines will be tied up as schools call parents, and relying on email is tenuous as administrators and staff are very busy during an emergency & can easily miss email updates with critical information.
- How will a school communicate with families if there are no phone lines, cell phone connections, or internet?
- Where are buses located if time is critical and an immediate evacuation is required?
- Who from the school will be designated to ensure evacuated students are united with their parent or Guardian (as identified on the Student Identification form) once they reach the pickup spot? In the event of a major disruption like an earthquake, it would be especially important to record who has left with whom, when, and their intended destination.
- Who will monitor the emergency backup medication for specific students, stored in the First Aid Room, if there is an evacuation?

Previous Initiatives by Puntledge School/DPAC EP Committee
For Follow up and/or Clarity

Dec, 2006

Kelly Broom, Puntledge EP Coordinator, enquired with the Ministry of Education, Provincial Emergency Program (PEP), and Emergency Social Services (ESS) about the policy regarding ESS care for unaccompanied minors, in order to finalize Puntledge emergency preparedness plans. Kelly also enquired about criminal background checks for volunteers (particularly those who would be working with children) and whether they would be able to handle the volume of children after an emergency. No clear answers were provided at that time.

Jan 2, 2007

ESS advises Puntledge that the policy now is that unaccompanied minors will need to be cared for at another school. This contradicts SD71 policy 3040 dated May 30, 2000, refer to this link for the wording: http://sd71.bc.ca/sd71/policy_manual/manual/3040.pdf

Jan 26, 2007

Gaylene Rehwald and Kelly Broom, members of Puntledge EP Committee do a presentation at DPAC and ask every DPAC member to take the questionnaire back to their school and either find someone that knows about EP to complete it or complete it themselves based on what they know. DPAC EP Committee is officially formed. *Minutes were distributed at the DPAC EP Meeting on March 10, 2009.*

February 1, 2007

Karae White, DPAC Chair, meets with Shirley Bond, Minister of Education and brings it to her attention that ESS will not accept unaccompanied minors and that more support is required for schools to develop adequate EP plans. Here is the link to the ministry' s document: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/news/photos/minvisits/sbond/2006/sd71.htm

The Journal was distributed at DPAC EP Meeting on March 10, 2009.

February 7, 2007

Trustee Proudfoot presents DPAC EP questionnaire to the Board for discussion about who is responsible for the care of the children after an emergency. They ask whether BCSTA could provide assistance to board with writing policy on emergency responses. It is suggested that this would be a good topic for an education program. BCSTA is asked to explore Worksafe BC to determine what is already established. *Minutes of the meeting were distributed at the DPAC EP Meeting on March 10, 2009.*

April 30, 2007

DPAC forwarded letter to Trustees asking for 6 items to be reviewed. Most have been done except for the following:

- To purchase the rights to the Emergency Management for North Shores School' s manual, and
- Lobby the Minister of Education to define. via provincial policy, a clarified direction and statement of responsibility for post-emergency student care.

Letter was distributed at the DPAC EP Meeting on March 10, 2009.

March 11, 2008

DPAC compiles questionnaire responses from January 26, 2007 into one document. Responses received from: Airport, Aspen, Brooklyn, Cape Lazo, Comox Elementary, Courtenay Middle School, Huband, Isfeld, Lake Trail, Puntledge, Robb Road, Valleyview, Vanier, and Village Park.

Summary of responses distributed at DPAC EP Meeting on March 10, 2009.

October 8, 2008

Ken Dawson, SD71 Trustee advises these schools have EP containers:

2006: Denman, Hornby, Huband, Courtenay Middle

2007: Airport, Cumberland Junior, Miracle Beach, Royston, Mark Isfeld, Brooklyn

Photos taken on November 16

Comox Valley Echo has 22 photos. Photo #22 is the main road that goes by SuperStore and is exactly how it looked while a Puntledge parent was driving her children to school on the 16th. That road was closed by 11:15am as was 5th Street bridge and 17th Street Bridge was closed to one lane only.
(http://hiderefer.com/?http://www2.canada.com/comoxvalleyecho/galleries/comox_nov16/index.html)

Comox Valley Record had an article. Look on the right-hand side of their website for the story.
(www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_north/comoxvalleyrecord/?current=4632)

Comox Valley Record video includes pictures showing the flood.
(http://hiderefer.com/?http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_north/comoxvalleyrecord/?current=4632#video)

Additional photos
(http://picasaweb.google.ca/kacrsadeghzadeh/CourtenayFloodingHighlights?feat=directlink)

Appendix 1 - SD71 Emergency Preparedness Suggested Plan

Phase 1 – First Year

Activity	Lead	Resources	Time commitment	$ Cost	Target Date
1. Create EP Advisory committee	School District	Staff and volunteer time, assistance from Local emergency program coordinator, North Shore Emergency Manual	2 hour meeting once a month	Staff time Approx. cost $1,000 per district	January 15 first meeting
2. Hazard and Risk assessment Each school Standard format (PEP interactive tool)	School District	Staff and volunteer time, Assistance from Local Emergency Program Coordinator, PEP interactive web tool for HRVA	4 hours per school	Staff time only	February 28, 2010
3. Plan and conduct basic	School District	Staff and PAC	2 hours planning and drill per	Staff and volunteer time	Complete May 31, 2010

drills all schools			school		
4. Presentation by Bernadette Woit	School District	Auditorium	3 hours	Speaker fees $600 approx.	September 20, 2010
5. Identify alternate radio communications for each school	School District	FRs or GMRS radios	4 hours planning and arranging purchase & staff training	$200 per school, approx.	October 15, 2010

Phase 2 – Second Year

Activity	Lead	Resources	Time commitment	$ Cost	Target Date
1. Let contract for School Board plan Emergency Plan	School District	Contractor, volunteers, staff, Local Government Emergency Program Coordinator	80 hours for contractor for master plan Staff and volunteer time	$8,000 for School Board plan	Completion March 31, 2011
2. Emergency radio communication plan for School Board	School District	Local Government Emergency Program Coordinator, local amateur radio volunteers, staff time	40 hours staff and volunteer time commitment	$2,000 for purchase of amateur radio or commercial radio, power supplies and antenna installation at key locations to provide communications between school board & identified	May 31, 2011

				schools & local authority	
3. Plan and conduct drills at each school and school board HQ	School District	Staff, volunteers	10 hours School district 5 hours per school	Staff and volunteer time	June 10, 2011
4. Purchase emergency supplies for each school	School District	PAC, local donations from businesses or service clubs, School Board funding	10 hours volunteer and staff time per school	$1,000 per school start up and $500 ongoing	June 30, 2011

Phase 3 – Ongoing

Activity	Lead	Resources	Time commitment	$ Cost	Target Date
1. Annual plan revision	School District	Staff, volunteers, Local Government Emergency Program Manager	20 hours HQ 10 hours per school	Staff and volunteer time	November 1 each year
2. Purchase and replace emergency supplies – maintenance program	School District	Emergency supplies and radio equipment for School District HQ, and each school	Staff and volunteer time 5 hours each location	$500 HQ $200 each school	November each year
3. Annual exercise and drill program	School District	Staff, volunteers, Local Government Emergency Program Manager	Staff and volunteer time 5 hours each location	Staff and volunteer time	May 31 each year

Appendix 2 – WCB Regulation 4.13 – Emergency Preparedness and Response, Risk Assessment, page 1
(http://www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/GuidelinePart4.asp?reportID=18772)

Appendix 3 – SD71 Policy - 3040 Emergency Preparedness and Response
(http://sd71.bc.ca/sd71/policy_manual/manual/3040.pdf)

Appendix 4 – SD71 Policy - 3040R1 – Emergency Preparedness and Response – Earthquake
(http://sd71.bc.ca/sd71/policy_manual/manual/3040R1.pdf)

Appendix 5 – SD71 Policy - 3041MR3 – First Aid
(http://sd71.bc.ca/sd71/policy_manual/manual/3041MR3.pdf)

Appendix 6 – SD71 Policy - 3016R2 – Criminal Record Search – Volunteers
(http://sd71.bc.ca/sd71/policy_manual/manual/3016R2.pdf)

Appendix 7 – SD71 Policy – 6022 – Protection of Pupils and the Maintenance of Order
(http://sd71.bc.ca/sd71/policy_manual/manual/6022.pdf)