



BC CONFEDERATION OF PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

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BCCPAC CLARIFIES PLAYGROUND GRANT PROCESS

BURNABY: Fairness was the goal of the process to distribute \$1 million in grants for playground equipment to schools that are members of BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC), according to BCCPAC President Kim Howland. BCCPAC is also not the only source for playground equipment funding from government.

“BCCPAC was given this grant money in recognition of the efforts of its members to raise awareness of the need for government funding for playgrounds. BCCPAC members spoke to the Minister of Education, at various meetings, and voted for member resolutions advocating for playground funding at our annual general meetings. The \$1 million grant was in recognition of these efforts,” said Howland. “It is not unusual for government to give a grant to a particular education partner. In the past, most education partner organizations have received grants for specific projects.”

In addition to the money given to BCCPAC to distribute among its membership of close to 1,100 Parent Advisory Councils across the province (each of which represents a school from K- 12), The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is providing \$1 million this year from community gaming grants and then another \$1 million each year for the next two years. These grants are available to any school. The schools that will receive grants this year will be announced soon. In addition to these grants, grants of \$50,000 are available to make playgrounds more accessible to children with disabilities from *Let's Play*, a joint initiative of the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Province of British Columbia.

While BCCPAC was pleased that grant money was made available for playground structures, a recent survey of its members showed that \$1 million would not meet the need. Developing criteria for which schools should receive a playground grant was extremely difficult because of the different issues affecting schools from all over the province. Does a large urban school deserve it more than a small rural school? The larger school has more students, but that means it also has a larger parent base for fundraising. The children in the small school need play equipment just as much, but may have exhausted the ability to raise funds. Some schools have had playground equipment removed due to seismic upgrading. Others have equipment that is unsafe and out-of-date. With so many potential applicants and different scenarios, the volunteer committee decided it would be impossible to choose between schools. They decided to hold a random selection process that would not require PACs to provide any matching funds. The schools could apply for grants of up to \$20,000, depending on their identified need. Each applicant was made aware of the process on the grant application form.

“We trusted that the PACs that applied really needed the money for playground equipment. It is therefore disheartening to find that some applied when they really didn't need it and now want to determine how the money they received is distributed. When the draw was made, a few extras were drawn in the event that a PAC no longer needed the funds. BCCPAC wants any PAC that feels it doesn't need the playground grant to return it so that we can allocate it to another needy school in the province.”