



Northwest  
Territories Minister of Education, Culture and Employment

MR. BOB BROMLEY  
MLA, WELEDEH

NOV 04 2014

**Statement in the House on Safety in Junior Kindergarten**

Please be informed that we have received your email dated November 03, 2014, regarding Junior Kindergarten (JK) children playing unsupervised in the Fort Simpson school parking lot, and on playground equipment not suitable for this age group. To find out more information on these matters, Department of Education, Culture and Employment staff immediately contacted the Dehcho Divisional Education Council, Superintendent, Ms. Terry Jaffray and the Principal of Bompas Elementary School, Ms. Kelley Andrews-Klein to discuss these very serious allegations.

Both Superintendent, Ms. Jaffray and Principal, Ms. Andrews-Klein expressed concern about these reports. The protocol in the education system is that if there are concerns about children's safety, they must be brought to the immediate attention of the principal. If these concerns are of a more serious nature, the principal brings these concerns to the attention of the superintendent, and they are dealt with immediately with input from all parties involved in a way that ensures safety for all children. Ms. Andrews-Klein or Ms. Jaffray was not made aware of any children playing unsupervised in the parking lot, and had this been the case, they would have resolved it right away.

Regarding the playground equipment, Ms. Jaffray and Ms. Andrews-Klein had received concerns that the playground equipment was not age appropriate for 4 year olds in the first week of school. In response to this issue, the Superintendent and Principal double checked the existing safety measures in their school playgrounds to accommodate the new JK children. The first involved ensuring that JK and Kindergarten students are only allowed to play in one of the three playgrounds at Bompas Elementary School, called Yellow Wing. The Principal indicated that there is a recess supervisor for each playground. As well, the playgrounds have always been divided by age and grade, so the JK children fit very well into the existing safety plan.

For extra safety precautions, the principal herself does regular recess supervision. As well, playground supervisors do not let JK students on the higher equipment, like monkey bars and swings, for safety reasons.

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The Bompas Elementary recess supervision has always followed a closely monitored supervision schedule that included before and after school supervision. At the beginning of the school year, Ms. Andrews-Klein also extended early morning supervision so that students are supervised as soon as the bus arrives. Bompas Elementary does not rely solely on playground equipment during recess. Students have access to trucks and sand toys for their recess fun. Recently, Bompas Elementary School has also started a Recess Buddy system. This buddy system pairs older students with younger students and encourages the older students to play games and interact with the JK and Kindergarten students. This Recess Buddy system is an excellent example that provides older students with leadership opportunities while younger students benefit from an engaged friend and role model.

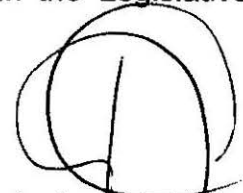
Currently, there are many preschool programs in the NWT that are operating out of schools, and have not had any reported issues with students and outdoor play. As well, in most communities the school is often the only location with a play structure that is used by all ages of children on evening and weekends.

As the Dehcho Divisional Education Council has done, Education Authorities and schools determine consistent expectations and schedules for the use of equipment that works for the needs of their children. If citizens are concerned for the safety of children, they must discuss these concerns with the school who can make the most immediate and effective changes to meet the needs of the community.

To reiterate, safety for JK children, and all students at Bompas Elementary School in Fort Simpson is of the utmost priority for the school staff and leaders of the Dehcho Divisional Education Council. In this way safety concerns are dealt with immediately and appropriately by highly qualified and attentive school staff.

In response to your request that I share this response with the Legislative Assembly, please note that I intend to table this letter in the Legislative Assembly in the near future.

Masi.



Jackson Lafferty

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