



Office of the Chairman

Office of the Director General

January 31, 2017

**Subject: Aftermath of Mosque Attack in Quebec City**

Dear EMSB Community,

It is with profound sadness that we have again witnessed a horrendous act of violence – this time in Quebec City on Sunday, January 29, 2017, in our own province and so close to home.

We have all been impacted by this tragedy particularly in view of its widespread media coverage. What makes this crime so heinous is the fact that the victims of this senseless crime were at prayer in a place of refuge and peace. Tragedies of this nature hit us hard and are difficult to understand and accept.

In comments to the Canadian people, Prime Minister Trudeau said: "This is a terrorist attack on Muslims in a centre of worship and refuge ... Muslim-Canadians are an important part of our national fabric and these senseless acts have no place in our communities, cities and country." Premier Couillard has also condemned the attack saying to the Muslim Community: "We are with you. You are at home. And you are welcome at home."

We share these sentiments expressed by our Canadian and Quebec leaders, and our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and the entire Muslim community as they struggle to come to terms with this incomprehensible event.

It is important to understand that following a traumatic event, even if it happens to someone else, it is normal to feel upset. Although each person reacts differently and according to his/her own personality and life experiences, there is a wide range of feelings and reactions that are generated by horrific events. Those who are particularly vulnerable because of previous experiences of trauma or loss may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

In view of the above, we offer the following practical suggestions to our EMSB parents and educators:

- **Stay calm:** How we, as adults, react to this tragedy can shape the way our children will react and their perceptions of safety. Do not allow your children repeated exposure to news reports and limit access to TV or Internet news which can make them overly anxious.

- **Find out what your child knows about the event:** When the topic comes up, encourage your child to let you know what they are thinking by asking “What have you heard about this?”
- **Explain it in a way that makes sense to your child:** Provide a developmentally appropriate, clear and straightforward explanation of the event to your child.
- **Listen and communicate:** Give your child the chance to voice his/her fears and answer his/her questions honestly and patiently. If necessary, provide various ways for children to express emotion, either through journaling, writing letters or drawing.
- **Offer reassurance:** Help your child feel safe with love and continued routines. It is important to keep in mind, and reassure our children, that an event like this is rare, and schools are generally one of the safest places for children during the school day.
- **Remember the long term process:** Dealing with news such as this for children is a process, a series of conversations, not a single sit-down. With your help it can be a healthy process, even if it is a very difficult subject. Expect a child to come back again and again with questions as they piece together what happened. Be on alert for signs that this news may be impacting them in an unhealthy way such as changes in their patterns of sleep and eating, unusual irritability or trouble focusing, obsessive or pervasive worry.

If your child / student seems to require particular attention, please do not hesitate to inform our school and community professionals (Principals, school psychologist, guidance counselor, spiritual and community animator, social worker and/or nurse). Our combined services are at the disposal of our students at all times.

As we begin this New Year, we will continue to be united in spirit with those bereaved and with the entire Muslim community. We offer them our prayerful support and encouragement in the difficult days ahead.

Yours truly,



Angela Mancini  
Chairman



Ann Marie Matheson  
Director General