

# Students send messages of care to Chilean miners

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OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Chile's consul general in Toronto visited St. Dominic Catholic School in Oakville, where he was shown how much the students care about the trapped miners in his country.

Patricio Powell visited the school Wednesday morning where he met the school's Grade 7 students. The students made a presentation to Powell and told him they cared for the miners and were praying for their rescue.

Thirty-three miners became trapped 700 metres under ground this past August in a San Jose mine when a rock above them collapsed over a tunnel. The miners are still trapped in the mine, but extrication efforts are well under way.

In the presentation to Powell, the students handed him 52 cards, that each Grade 7 student made to be given to the miners and their families. The card project was started at the beginning of the school year, said the teacher John MacPhail, who spearheaded the project.

"What you are doing is something that really helps," Powell said in his thank you speech to the students.

"A couple of the miners are acting as spiritual leaders of the group, which is something that is just as important as food and many other things. This is a challenge for them. But to know that people like you care about them is essential."



ERIC RIEHL / SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

**THANK YOU:** The Chilean Consul General Patricio Powell spoke to St. Dominic School students on Wednesday to thank them for the letters Grade 7 students wrote to the trapped miners and their families in Chile.

Powell also talked to the students about the state of the miners.

"As you may know we're waiting for some very good news next week," he said. "There is a possibility that they will get the miners out by next week if the machine-work works out."

The students also had a chance to ask Powell some questions. He told them that the miners might get out as early as late next week. However, there may still be obstacles along the way, as even though the drills have dug as far

down as 550 metres. Though the drills are close to the shaft where the miners are trapped, he said there might be rocks along the way.

He also told them that the cards would be sent to Chile immediately and will likely reach the miners next week, maybe when they are rescued.

He said the miners are in good health. Through a narrow tube they are able to receive clothing, medicine, food, reading materials and they even have a projector for watching movies

and video clips of their families.

The miners were initially trapped in complete isolation for more than two weeks. To survive those two weeks, Powell said they had a pick up truck loaded with water. Their helmet-lights provided some light, as did the battery in the truck.

Since they have been discovered, they have been given electricity.

When a student asked if it was cold in the mine, Powell said it was quite the opposite.

"It's about 33 degrees Celsius, which is like a warm summer day and it's humid," he said. "They are not cold. It's the opposite, it's too hot."

He said the miners wear shorts and t-shirts and have been provided clothing made of a material that can help prevent infection.

Powell thanked the students for all their work.

"I represent my government in the province of Ontario and this is one of the most wonderful aspects of my work: to feel that there is a real connection between human beings around the world," he said.

MacPhail also thanked his students for their work. "Mr. Powell has been deeply moved by what you have done," he said. "You have the power to make change in the world, all of you. No matter how big, each of you possesses the kindness, the intellect and, of course, a very strong Catholic upbringing to make and seek justice in this world."

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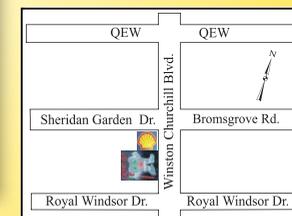
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Kevin Flynn, MPP - Oakville

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