

## NEWS

## ▼ POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

## Okanagan College is prepared for a Haiti-like disaster

A friend of mine just got back from Haiti and described visiting Port-au-Prince as the worst experience of his life.

Surrounded by the stench of rotting corpses while being swarmed by children asking for food was for him both heart-wrenching and frustrating, as there was little he could do.

On top of all this he said he only saw two bulldozers in a city whose first priority is to open the roadways so aid can make its way to the camps.

Haiti's inability to



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clean up after the quake can and will stall any chances for recovery.

At the Universite d'Etat d'Haiti, all but one building is still standing and few students are willing to go inside.

Hundreds of their classmates and many of their professors lie dead in

the rubble, which makes up the campus grounds.

According to reports, students are aimlessly walking around trying to figure out how they can go back to class and wondering if they will ever be able to finish their degree.

Professors are wondering if and when the university will open its doors and if it does, what can they offer when whole departments perished in the quake.

This type of a disaster is so debilitating that to start over seems like it will take a miracle.

This type of lost hope

is something I can only imagine. It is also what separates our post-secondary system from Haiti.

Barring the sorrow of loss of life, if Okanagan College was hit by an earthquake and some of our buildings crumbled there is a good chance we would probably be functional within a month.

At most Canadian post-secondary institutions, many have what is called a business continuity plan. This plan looks at various risks associated with business practices and infrastructure and how to mitigate these

risks through action plans.

For example, our Information Technology department has been diligently working on building a secondary data centre which is linked to our primary data centre.

This secondary centre is located elsewhere so if the primary IT data centre were to be destroyed in a disaster our critical data and systems could be quickly restored.

Another big difference which separates Haiti from Canada is our government's ability to restore services.

As a publicly fund-

ed post-secondary school, the provincial government would step in right away to make sure students were able to finish their studies.

Most likely the college would secure leased space and classes would be held off campus until we were able to rebuild.

Funds to rebuild would be provided by the government.

This doesn't seem to be an option for the Haiti

schools.

Their government does not have the resources to re-establish what limited education system they had and foreign aid right now is earmarked to fight hunger, stop the spread of disease, clean up the rubble and restore some order to this shattered country.

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