



October 17, 2017

Ref: 196148

Robert Ford, Interim PAC Chair  
Hudson Elementary  
**Email: robert@quokkasystems.com**

Dear Mr. Ford:

Thank you for your letter of September 12, 2017, addressed to the Honourable John Horgan, Premier, the Honourable Robert Fleming, Minister of Education, and the Honourable Carole James, Minister of Finance, regarding seismic upgrades in Vancouver. I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

I understand and appreciate your concerns around the seismic safety of schools. I would like to assure you, the safety of students and teachers is a top priority. The Ministry is committed to accelerating the school Seismic Mitigation Program to make sure all our schools are safe for students and teachers. In fact, we are currently working with school boards, and local municipal officials to meet an ambitious timeline, so we can get schools upgraded quickly. Additionally, we are working with the Seismic Mitigation Program experts, including the Engineers and Geoscientists British Columbia, to look for ways to more efficiently and cost-effectively meet and exceed the building code for seismic safety.

The Ministry and Vancouver School Board (VSB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2014 for the Vancouver Project Office, which has designated resources, funded by the Ministry, to accelerate the completion of seismic projects in the district expeditiously and cost effectively. As part of the MOU, VSB agreed to develop a Long Range Facilities Plan to identify which schools are priorities for investment.

It is important to note, the Ministry and VSB are working closely on advancing work for high-risk seismic projects and have invested over \$478 million to complete seismic upgrades and replacements in Vancouver. Since the MOU was signed in August 2014, the following projects have proceeded to construction or design with a combined value of \$301 million:

- Kitsilano Secondary;
- Lord Nelson Elementary;
- Lord Tennyson Elementary;
- Dr. Annie B. Jamieson;
- Sir Sandford Fleming Elementary;
- Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith Elementary;
- General Gordon Elementary;
- L'ecole Bilingue Elementary;

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**Ministry of  
Education**

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- Queen Mary Elementary;
- Maple Grove Elementary;
- Lord Strathcona Elementary;
- Sir Matthew Begbie Elementary; and
- Bayview Elementary

There is still a lot of work to do, and a number of business cases are being developed to ensure more schools in Vancouver are seismically safe.

The Delta School District and Vancouver School District are very different, with unique challenges. For example, the Vancouver School District is experiencing enrolment growth in certain areas, and stable or declining enrolment in other areas. Therefore, careful planning is required on how to best utilize their schools to meet enrolment needs. Additionally, the Vancouver School District has a large number of surplus seats, primarily located on the east side where future enrolment is expected to remain low and is experiencing substantial growth on the west side. Therefore the Vancouver School District needs to carefully plan which schools are priorities for investment now and for the foreseeable future. I understand the Vancouver School District is currently reviewing enrolment, catchments, and programming in an effort to best utilize available space.

It is also important to understand, the process of seismically upgrading or replacing a school is very complex and requires thorough analysis of all possibilities to ensure the best option is selected. The typical planning and project development cycle can take several months or longer depending on the complexity of the project. In addition, with the possibility of having to relocate students into swing space, the Vancouver School District and the construction industry can only undertake construction activities on so many schools simultaneously. The Vancouver School District has been looking at ways to establish more swing space so they can accelerate their Seismic Mitigation Program.

In regards to your suggestion to have a chart that shows progress, the Ministry of Education posts a quarterly progress report for the Seismic Mitigation Program. The last update was August 2017 and you can review the progress report here:

[http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/capital-planning/seismic-mitigation/progress\\_report.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/resource-management/capital-planning/seismic-mitigation/progress_report.pdf)

If you have any questions or require further information, you can contact me directly by email at [Lesley.Ballman@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Lesley.Ballman@gov.bc.ca), or by phone at (250) 361-6584.

Again, thank you for writing. I appreciate having the opportunity to review your comments.

Sincerely,



Lesley Ballman, Regional Director  
Capital Management Branch