

May 27, 2022

Honourable Jennifer Whiteside

Ministry of Education and Child Care
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
E: educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Whiteside,

At the April 25, 2022 public Board meeting the Vancouver Board of Education passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education write to the Minister of Education and Child Care in reply to the March 15, 2022 Ministry Response to the 2022/23 VSB Annual Five-Year Capital Plan Submission to express (1) our concern that no new major capital projects have been approved, and (2) our dismay that three Seismic projects in development from previous years, David Thompson Secondary, False Creek Elementary, and Killarney Secondary, have been deferred.

Moreover, the Vancouver Board of Education host a meeting for all Vancouver MLA's to share the business case for capital funding and seismic safety concerns of Vancouver H1 rated schools, and that this issue be forwarded to the Advocacy Committee for discussion.

Our Board values the ongoing support the Ministry has provided to our Seismic Mitigation Program and is appreciative of past major capital project approvals. We are however, concerned that for three consecutive years no major capital projects have been approved and that three projects previously supported by the Ministry have now been 'deferred.'

As you are aware, the Board approved the District's [Long-Range Facilities Plan](#) (LRFP) in January 2021, which was developed in alignment with updated LRFP guidelines released in April 2019. In May 2021 the Amended Capital Plan Response Letter introduced the request for a Long-Term Investment Plan (LTIP) - a new planning process unique to the VSB:

Additionally, Ministry staff requested to work alongside the District to develop a LTIP that 'incorporates information from the recently approved Long Range Facilities Plan information, seismic priorities, partnerships, public use of facilities and enrolment changes in communities, including Olympic Village'.

In response, the District provided the [Long-Term Investment Plan](#) to the Ministry in early October 2021. At that time, the Board felt assured that the LTIP had provided sound business cases and so the decision of the Ministry to 'defer' three previously supported capital projects – David Thompson Secondary, Killarney Secondary, and False Creek Elementary - is particularly disappointing and confusing to the Board and these school communities. The David Thompson community, in particular, was expectant of advancing its seismic project rather than being sent back to the starting gate to 'try again'.

Board of Education Trustees:

Janet Fraser – Board Chair,
Estrellita Gonzalez – Vice-Chair,
Fraser Ballantyne, Lois Chan-Pedley,
Carmen Cho, Oliver Hanson, Barb Parrott,
Jennifer Reddy, Allan Wong

The Board is aware that in the Southeast region of the District there are over 4,000 secondary students attending seismically unsafe secondary schools, including David Thompson and Killarney. The District has worked for many years on the David Thompson project – the existing school is over 60 years old – including collaborating with the Vancouver Park Board over four years to provide for a land exchange with Gordon Park to allow the construction of a new school without disrupting the school community. Given the already long timeline for this project there is now also the option of temporarily relocating the entire school community to the existing building on the Hamber site, which will be available in 2024, giving another pathway for this project.

The Board understands the potential relationship between the requested new elementary school at Olympic Village and the False Creek Elementary seismic project; yet is very disappointed that the False Creek project has been deferred and there is still no support for Olympic Village despite the promise made during the 2020 election campaign.

For these three deferred projects the District has followed Ministry requirements and resourced more than \$1.4M to advance to the third and final stage of the funding approval process. The Board remains hopeful that the deferrals will be reversed, and, in the event this does not occur, that Ministry re-imburses the VSB for the (sunk) cost of this work already undertaken. The Board and VSB school communities are aware that there was a 2030 timeline for completing seismic projects, and so we are also concerned that the deferred projects and other projects prioritized in the LTIP and Capital Plan are not being advanced in a timeframe that aligns with the Ministry's commitment to providing safe schools for students.

The Board values its working relationship with you and the Ministry of Education and Child Care and is requesting a response to the concerns raised in this letter and in particular:

- Predictable funding to advance the VSB capital program in keeping with the Ministry's SMP commitments and capital funding responsibilities – our year one priority requests were:
 - Churchill Secondary, Mackenzie Elementary, Renfrew Elementary (seismic)
 - New elementary school at Olympic Village
 - Hudson Elementary, False Creek Elementary, Cavell Elementary (expansions)
- The reconsideration of the decision to defer the David Thompson Secondary, Killarney Secondary and False Creek Elementary seismic projects

With Regards,



Janet Fraser
Board Chair

cc: Vancouver MLAs
Vancouver MPs
City of Vancouver Mayor & Councillors
VBE Trustees
Helen McGregor, Superintendent
J. David Green, Secretary-Treasurer