

November 9, 2018

RE: Proposed Seismic Mitigation Plan for Edith Cavell Elementary

Dear Minister Fleming, Minister Heyman, Members of the BC Parliamentary Committee on Education, City of Vancouver Mayor and Council, and Vancouver School Board Trustees,

Many of you may be aware that \$15.6 million in funding was recently announced for the seismic upgrade of Edith Cavell Elementary School in Vancouver. While we are pleased with this long-awaited news, the proposed plan has major issues that we need your assistance in solving:

1. The announcement came without consultation or communication with families, teachers, childcare providers, or other stakeholders. These are public funds and there has been no stakeholder engagement. This is unacceptable. Other schools that have gone through the seismic upgrade process have been consulted well in advance, but we were not. The lack of consultation has been attributed to a change in the Memorandum of Understanding that was renewed in 2017; however, there is very little difference in the actual wording of the Memorandum. Practically speaking, there has been a change in the *implementation* of the Memorandum. **We are asking for meaningful consultation with the Vancouver Project Office and Ministry of Education.**
2. Cavell not only requires a seismic upgrade, but there are significant deficiencies that have been deferred for years. The proposed seismic upgrade will only update the walls and roof of the school. None of the over \$5 million in deferred maintenance at the school will be addressed. In the event of an earthquake, an "upgraded" building will allow students to exit safely but will likely not be usable afterwards. After the two-and-a-half-year upgrade, our school will still have lead pipes (with lead in the water), single-pane windows, inefficient HVAC systems, and more. This is an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars over the long run. **We are asking for the Vancouver Project Office and Ministry of Education to include the cost of remediating deferred maintenance when making funding decisions and project approvals.**
3. Cavell Elementary is located in the Cambie Corridor which is still densifying rapidly under the Cambie Corridor Phase 3 Official Community Plan. The Vancouver School Board has documented the need for Cavell expansion from 290 to 485 students as early as 2019. Our school is at 122% capacity with six portables on site (two are used by Small Talk Preschool). Students have been denied the opportunity to learn at their community school; in fact, there is a lottery in Kindergarten to decide which children may attend Cavell. The VSB justified moving Cavell up the seismic list and bumping other schools down so that needed expansion could urgently be done in conjunction with the seismic upgrade. The VSB has estimated that this will cost \$7 million; however, this expansion has not been funded provincially and is not happening. The total lack of coordination on these projects is astounding and a poor use of taxpayer dollars. **We are asking for the Ministry of Education and Vancouver School Board to work together to coordinate seismic projects and expansion projects to minimize disruption to students. We are asking for**

**the Ministry of Education and Vancouver School Board to consult and work with the City of Vancouver to explore ways of funding needed expansion and upgrades.**

4. There are over 50 additional school seismic upgrade projects planned for the next decade. VSB school seismic projects must be financially responsible when utilizing public funds. Taxpayers deserve fiscal accountability and students deserve safe schools. **We are asking for the consultation process to be reviewed so as to minimize negative impacts on schools that have yet to receive seismic upgrades.**
5. Families of Cavell were not only shocked but devastated to learn that the school would be split and students would be shuffled by buses to two other schools in the furthest possible location in Vancouver. Once they calculated the entire travel time, they realized the students' daily commute would total 1.5 hours on **unsupervised** buses. Students have never been placed so far away from their home community in any other VSB seismic upgrade or school re-build. The existing school program would be negatively impacted with the loss of programs such as big buddies (pairing older and younger students together for a year), school-wide assemblies and concerts, and parent volunteers to read in classrooms and help with hot lunch. Extra-curricular activities will be cancelled/severely curtailed. Many of our amazing teachers have said they will leave and our PAC will not be able to fundraise effectively at two schools far from where everybody lives. **We are asking for a single swing site located closer to our home community.**

Our issues are resolvable, and we are asking the VSB, Ministry of Education and City of Vancouver to come to the table, engage in consultation and fix them. Please don't allow the heart of Vancouver to be hollowed out.

Kind regards,

*Brenda Brown*

Brenda Brown  
Vice-Chair and Seismic Committee Chair  
Edith Cavell Elementary Parent Advisory Committee

C.C.  
Suzanne Hoffman  
Kathy O'Sullivan  
Vancouver Project Office  
Jim de Hoop  
Jim Meschino  
David Nelson  
Capital Delivery Branch