



June 19, 2015

Ref: 181271/179263

Kathy Findlay, Chair
Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
Queen Mary Elementary
c/o School District No. 39 (Vancouver)
Email: kfindlay4@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Findlay:

Thank you for your letters of December 29, 2014, and April 11, 2015, addressed to the Honourable Peter Fassbender, Minister of Education, regarding the Queen Mary Elementary seismic upgrade and partial replacement project. I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Minister and I apologize for the delay in my response.

As you are aware, the Vancouver School District is responsible for a large number of schools that have been identified as high seismic risk. To date, the Province has spent more than \$217 million on seismic improvements in Vancouver, and we have prioritized our capital funds to commit a further \$590 million in projects currently in development; for a total of \$800 million to ensure schools in Vancouver are seismically safe.

Queen Mary Elementary is a seismic project, and as such, the Province is committed to funding all of the costs associated with its seismic upgrade. However, in order to ensure provincial funds are focused on safety first, project costs beyond seismic improvements, such as window replacements, are the responsibility of the Vancouver School District and are not covered as a part of the seismic program.

The Ministry provides the Vancouver Board of Education with an Annual Facility Grant (AFG) that is intended to address aging building components, such as windows, and regular wear and tear. This year, the Ministry provided \$11.5 million towards the School District's AFG. It is the responsibility of each School District to keep all of its facilities in good condition and to establish funding priorities.

Furthermore, the Ministry provides School Districts with a budget for each of their approved capital seismic projects, based on identified engineering requirements and cost estimates developed by the School District, and it is the School District's responsibility to deliver the project on time and on budget. I agree that prolonged project planning and development can negatively impact the costs of a project, which is why we strongly encourage the Vancouver School District to advance project work expeditiously once funding is approved.

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In relation to your concerns about the impacts of changing back to the HST system, the Ministry provided additional funds to cover those impacts. Decisions regarding changes in scope have been made by the Vancouver School District in order to ensure the project is delivered on the agreed upon budget. I understand these changes have not affected safety improvements and have been focused on “non-instructional” impacts; such as reduced building finishings, reduced landscaping and some reduction on common area square footage. I understand these decisions were not made lightly but were necessary to ensure seismic funds are focused on improving student safety across the Province.

The Queen Mary Elementary seismic upgrade project is scheduled for completion in August 2016. Ministry and Vancouver School District staff will continue to work together to finalize this project. Should the School District wish to fund window replacements this could be accommodated into the current construction cycle or staged, over time, if they have available funds post construction.

In August 2014, the Ministry and the Vancouver School Board signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a Vancouver Project Office that will have designated resources to accelerate the completion of seismic projects in the school district. Since the MOU was signed, progress has been made in advancing a number of projects. You can expect to see more projects move to design, tender and construction throughout the summer.

In the meantime, I encourage you and the PAC to work directly with the Vancouver School District on matters of concern to the parents, students and staff at the school.

I look forward to the completion of this project, which will benefit the students and staff at Queen Mary Elementary, as well as the community of West Point Grey.

Sincerely yours,



Shanna Mason
Assistant Deputy Minister
Planning & Major Projects Division

pc: Honourable Christy Clark, Premier