

Kitsilano Parent Advisory Council

c/o Kitsilano Secondary School
2550 West Tenth Avenue
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V6K 2J6

Chair:

James Burton

Vice Chair:

Marina Niks

Secretary:

Thomas Winkler

Treasurer:

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<http://kitsilano.vsb.bc.ca/Parents/>

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22 May 2008

The Honourable Gordon Campbell, M.L.A.
Premier of British Columbia West Annex
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

Dear Premier Campbell

Re: School Seismic Upgrading

In light of recent tragic events in China and the disproportionate failure of school buildings, the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) of Kitsilano Secondary wants to express our concern over the poor rate of progress on seeing this issue addressed in our district. That an estimated 40% of casualties were school children clearly reminds us of the importance for immediate action to prevent a similar tragedy occurring in British Columbia. At the Kitsilano Secondary PAC Annual General Meeting on May 20, 2008, there was a motion to send you a letter expressing this concern.

Thanks to your commitment to assess the magnitude of the problem of risk to schools, the engineering community has told us that in BC, as elsewhere in the world, schools are among our highest risk structures. We applaud your 2004 commitment of \$1.5 billion to see this problem addressed by 2019.

In 2005, Minister Christensen committed to completing 13 fast-track upgrades to high risk schools in Vancouver by 2008. We are on track to complete only one of those projects on target. Our school is one of those high risk schools. We note the effort announced on May 23 to speed progress by fast tracking 4 lower risk buildings, but we remain concerned that there are no signs that work will even begin by summer 2009 at our school; fully 1 year after work had been committed to be completed. We are left wondering about the value of doing a risk assessment and prioritizing projects, if the highest priority projects continue to progress at a glacial rate, while lower priority projects receive new fast-track funding.

The mechanisms to reach your goal do not appear to have been put in place; nor do there appear to be processes to ensure an integrated approach. We agree with Families for School Seismic Safety (FSSS) who expressed concern to you in April 2007, that "the goal and the vision which drives the process in every district should be a holistic one in the service of better educational buildings in every sense of the word."

Our neighbours in Seattle used an integrated approach to achieve renewal of their educational infrastructure while they also ensured its seismic safety. Their program was called "Building Excellence".

The parents and PAC of Kits Secondary would like to take a leadership role in ensuring timely progress on this issue that also embraces the concept of "Building Excellence" in every sense of these words. We look forward to receiving confirmation of our proposed meeting at which we are hoping to explore creative solutions

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to speed progress towards this goal.

There are some heritage and civic usage issues which are specific to Vancouver which lead us to suggest consideration should be given to working with the city to develop mechanisms to add local funding (similar to Seattle's approach) , above the provincial educational capital allocations, to ensure that the complexities of addressing all these concerns is accomplished in a way which leaves us all feeling proud of the work that is carried out.

Premier Campbell, parents are looking to you to show leadership in creating the positive engagement that will be required to address this issue rapidly, in a manner we can all feel proud of, and to make your strong commitment of 2004 a reality.

As we are nearing the end of the school year, we hope to receive confirmation of your visit shortly and look forward to discussing how, by working together, we can ensure a safe and vibrant future for Kitsilano Secondary and all BC schools.

Sincerely,

The Kitsilano Parent Advisory Council

cc: Clarence Hansen, Chair, VSB

cc: Mayor and council

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