



October 2012

VIA EMAIL

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Letter sent to 37 Boards of Education
of School Districts located in Seismic Zones

On May 12th of this year at the University of British Columbia, the Ministry of Education delivered an update on the province's Seismic Mitigation Program (SMP). The update included a comprehensive re-assessment of seismic safety at BC public schools based on the latest scientific research, improved technology and study of recent major earthquakes around the world, and approval of more than \$122 million to address structural upgrades at 14 high-priority schools.

The re-assessments and research were conducted through a partnership between the Ministry of Education, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEGBC) and the University of British Columbia's Department of Civil Engineering. The 14 projects are spread throughout 12 BC school districts. Projects were selected from the most recent district capital plans and represent top-ranked projects based on the updated assessment of seismic safety risk.

The Ministry advised that the new assessment information would be made publically available as soon as the data was vetted by school districts, and amended as required by Ministry staff. This work has now been completed and new information is available on the Ministry's website at: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/capitalplanning/seismic/welcome.htm>

Included on the above-noted webpage are three lists that provide the following important information:

1. Seismic Mitigation Program Status Report

- This is a list of schools that are complete, under construction, proceeding to construction and in planning (supported).

2. Seismic Structural Risk Rating by Block

- This report shows updated risk ratings by block for all schools within the province's 37 school districts that are located in high-risk seismic zones.

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3. High Risk Seismic Schools Requiring Structural Upgrades

- This is a list of schools that have yet to be approved to proceed. School districts are to rank these schools for submission in capital plan submissions to government.

Current estimates to complete the unapproved seismic projects total approximately \$1.3 billion. To ensure that seismic projects are completed in a timely and cost-effective manner, government has provided the following direction for planning, designing and implementing these projects:

- Boards of education must focus on seismic upgrading to ensure student safety, rather than school renewal;
- Generally, the lowest cost option will be pursued; upgrades should not exceed the cost of replacement;
- Where seismic upgrades or renewal is less than the cost of replacement, costs specifically related to heritage will be limited to 10% of the construction cost;
- To improve the development of options to best address seismic upgrades, school districts will work with APEGBC's Technical Review Board of expert consulting engineers to review all seismic projects and ensure the most appropriate, cost-effective mitigation options are explored. This will include the use of Seismic Project Information Reports (SPIRs) that will be developed by structural engineers to identify scope, schedule, budget and risks for structurally upgrading school blocks; and,
- Where heritage buildings are recommended for replacement, if possible, the building should be retained by reducing the scope and cost of seismic mitigation work below replacement cost, while safeguarding life safety.

Ongoing communication between school district and Ministry staff will be a key ingredient for success in the planning and implementation of the SMP. School district staff should contact their respective Planning Officer with any questions they may have regarding the SMP.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By:

Don McRae
Minister

cc: Superintendent of Schools
Secretary-Treasurer