



September 9, 2019

Ref: 212746

Janet Fraser, Chair
Board of Education
School District No. 39 (Vancouver)
Email: janet.fraser@vsb.bc.ca

Dear Ms. Fraser:

Thank you for your letter of June 24, 2019, regarding a request to amend the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) associated with the Vancouver Project Office (VPO). More specifically, the following two motions were passed by the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) on May 27/29, 2019:

- 1) That the Board engage with the ministry of education in a renegotiation of the memorandum of understanding for Seismic Projects. As part of a renewed MOU the District would seek increased opportunities to engage the public in the process and to increase transparency; and
- 2) That the Board request to have a trustee serve as a non-voting member of the Vancouver Project Steering Committee.

The Ministry of Education is certainly willing to renegotiate the MOU to ensure it accurately reflects the requirements of each party. I understand that VBE and Ministry staff have begun a process of considering amendments to the MOU, which will then be reviewed and endorsed by the Steering Committee. The Ministry and VBE will have an opportunity to review any suggested amendments before an updated MOU is prepared for final signature.

School districts are encouraged to involve their local education partners and the public in school capital planning and development. This is an important part of successful school capital project development. However, the Ministry is not supportive of the VBE selecting or publicly presenting a preferred option for a seismic project prior to government approval of a project.

I would like to thank you for your participation at the Vancouver Education Roundtable in July. It was a productive meeting with many good ideas generated. There was significant discussion about enhancing public consultation for school projects and how schools are used. I see value in consultation for planning a school upgrade or replacement however this must not come at the cost of slowing the pace of seismic projects. The VBE, the City of Vancouver and the Ministry must all be working to expedite seismic projects so that safe seats are delivered as fast as possible for students, families, teachers and staff.

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Government has created several boards and steering committees to provide additional coordination and guidance for school capital projects. These are operational entities that do not include MLAs, Ministers or trustees. Having a VBE trustee serve as a non-voting member on the VPO Steering Committee is not supported.

Since the VPO was established, over 20 seismic projects have been approved and are in various stages of development (design, construction, etc.) or have been completed. As a result, thousands of seismically safe seats are being created for Vancouver students. I fully expect that the current MOU and Steering Committee structure will enable us to continue the accelerated pace of seismic project approval that we have seen since September 2017.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



Rob Fleming
Minister

pc: Reg Bawa, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Management Division, Ministry of Education
Joel Palmer, Executive Director, Capital Management Branch, Ministry of Education
Kim Anderson, Assistant Vice President, Partnerships BC
Janson Ho, Director, Vancouver Project Office
Suzanne Hoffman, Superintendent, Vancouver School Board
David Green, Secretary Treasurer, Vancouver School Board
Jim Meschino, Director of Facilities, Vancouver School Board