



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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December 19, 2014

Queen Mary Elementary PAC
2000 Trimble Street,
Vancouver, BC, V6R 3Z4
Attention: Kathy Findlay, PAC Chair

Dear Ms. Findlay,

RE: Queen Mary Elementary Seismic Upgrade and Partial Replacement

Thank you for your letter of December 12th addressed to Allan Wong expressing the concerns of the Queen Mary PAC regarding the ongoing construction project at your school. As I am the newly appointed Chairperson of the Planning & Facilities Committee (Committee II), I am responding to your correspondence.

The PAC has been an important partner in the planning of the new school and an advocate in building the best school possible.

The areas of concern expressed are addressed in order as follows:

1. The original total project budget was \$16,668,634 which the Ministry increased to \$18,393,955 at our request in January through the use of reserves. We have a small construction contingency and there are still some funds in reserves for additional construction contingency.
2. The change from HST to PST/GST has had a significant effect on the project. The taxes increased from \$250,030 to \$762,717 or a variance of \$512,687. This has affected a number of projects and the topic has been raised as a concern with Ministry representatives at the level of the Deputy Minister.
3. The replacement of the windows in the red building was not funded in the original Project Agreement. The red building is a seismic upgrade and window replacement is considered maintenance work which is not funded in a seismic upgrade. We are replacing many damaged, Lexan and plywood, in-filled lites in the building. The windows at Kitchener were not intended to be replaced, however a building envelope issue discovered during construction necessitated their replacement. We have confirmed with the Architect that replacement of glass is not a code related issue.

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4. The foot print of the school was reduced from what was originally shown during design development in response to construction costs. Reducing the area was the only way to achieve the large cost savings required. The building still meets the Ministry of Education's Area Standards for an Elementary School.
5. Early Learning space is no longer funded by the Ministry on new projects. Early Learning space was being allocated to projects at the time the Queen Mary Project Definition report was being developed. The Ministry stopped providing the Early Learning Space allocation just at the time of the Queen Mary Project Agreement – because there was no provincial Early Learning programming. Due to the need to decrease building area, elimination of the Early Learning Space was seen as the least disruptive to the school program.
6. As a cost savings, the music room and resource area were moved to the basement of the Heritage building. They now occupy spaces that were going to be left unfinished and used for storage. With the relocation of the music and resource rooms to these spaces, these rooms are now going to be renovated. The new building requires a very efficient program and the reduction of storage areas was seen as the least disruptive to the school program. The existing windows in these rooms will be retained and repaired.
7. As part of the cost savings, some millwork was removed from some of the classrooms, however all classrooms still have a teacher's cabinet and additional storage shelving above the cubbies. The teachers also have professional offices containing storage for teaching materials and personal items.
8. We realize there has been inconsistent communication on what items the PAC can fundraise for such as furniture and balcony improvements. We recognize that there is a need to perhaps improve policy about fund raising and are working on a standard message to provide to PAC groups. We can, however, confirm that the balcony structure will be built as part of the contract.
9. Design changes were communicated to the PAC on three occasions February 11, April 8, and most recently on September 30, 2014. Communication touched on the challenges the project was experiencing with respect to construction costs. VSB staff have been upfront on what design changes have been implemented throughout but are concerned regarding the "inconsistent communications" comment. We would like to continue to work with the Queen Mary PAC to understand and receive feedback on how to improve the process.