

School seismic upgrading plan approved  
CBC WebPosted Oct 27 2004 07:16 PM PDT

VANCOUVER - Vancouver school trustees want earthquake-proofing of 69 schools to happen sooner rather than later, approving a plan to have the work completed in 10 years instead of the suggested 15.

The plan is the school board's response to a provincial report that found 69 city schools require seismic upgrades. The 10-year plan will cost \$365 million. The VSB doesn't have that money but wants the provincial government to pay for the work using its billion-dollar budget surplus.

Trustee Allan Wong hopes the province will see how efficiently Seattle dealt with seismic upgrades, and follow suit. "Ten years ago, they were in the same boat as we are. They are in the midst of completing all their schools. So we feel it's quite reasonable to have a 10-year plan."

Families for School Seismic Safety has been lobbying hard to have the seismic upgrading done as quickly as possible. Spokesperson Michael Bostock has two children who attend one of the city's top 10 schools-at-risk during an earthquake. He says that as a seismologist at UBC, he knows how vulnerable the entire region is to a major earthquake. "It's the sort of thing that people tend to forget about I guess in the face of other obvious, or in-their-face kinds of pressures. So we face a very real risk and I'm delighted to hear that finally some action is being taken."

So far, there's no word from Victoria on additional spending on seismic upgrading of schools. The Ministry of Education is still waiting for risk assessments of schools in the rest of B.C.