

Elementary schools still the seismic priority

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VANCOUVER - The Vancouver School Board says a new list ranking schools according to their safety in the event of an earthquake, won't necessarily be followed when seismic upgrading work begins.

A new priority list – based partly on school population – puts nine secondary schools in the top 10 in need of improvements

But the schools' facilities manager says that doesn't mean they will be upgraded first.

"In the five-year plan that the board just passed, we specifically said that we're going to do one secondary every year and then we'd do several elementaries," says Les King.

The province recently committed \$1.5 billion dollars for seismic upgrading of schools across the province. But King says the VSB can't finalize its plans until it gets more details.

"Once we actually get an announcement about how much money and what conditions might come with that money, then we can actually build a construction list. And a construction list might look quite a bit different than this list."

Kathryn Harrison of Families for School Seismic Safety says she's relieved that elementary schools are still a priority.

"The high schools pretty much automatically rise to the top simply by virtue of the number of students in them, but at the same time some of the children in smaller schools may face the same or even higher individual risk."

The public will get its chance to tell the Vancouver school board what it thinks of the new rankings at a meeting on Thursday night.