

CBC Radio

Parents raise school safety questions

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VANCOUVER - Some White Rock parents want to know why it took so long for officials to evaluate the seismic safety of their children's school.

Last week, the Surrey School District closed White Rock Elementary after a review found two buildings could crumble in an earthquake.

Ann Wright, who has two daughters who attend the school, is upset that White Rock Elementary was only checked after an engineer who looked at another school in the district suggested it.

"What if there wasn't a report or a seismic assessment at that school? Then our school wouldn't have been looked at," she says. "And then we're totally still in there with a very inadequate building for our children."

Surrey School District Superintendent Fred Renihan agrees they need a better system. He says currently, assessments are only made when a school is slated for renovations.

But he says changes are coming. "We're putting our own system in place and we're going to ask the ministry for funding."

Renihan says district officials are compiling a list of all schools that still need seismic studies. And he says he expects to have engineering reports within the next year on whether those schools could withstand an earthquake.

Portables are being set up at White Rock Elementary this week, and classes for the 400 students are expected to resume next Monday.