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**Local News**

## **Earthquake Upgrades Could Be Cheaper**

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**By: Michael McLaughlin**

We've been telling you about schools that need earthquake upgrades-- including White Rock Elementary that's had one building condemned.

If the BC government uses a new strategy to evaluate and fix the problems, the cost could become manageable.

The original estimate to upgrade 70 or so schools was between one and two billion dollars.

But that was done over ten years ago. Andy Mill and the BC Association of Professional Engineers say another, standardized evaluation, could lead to big savings. Mill thinks that a new approach, including cutting-edge research developed at UBC, could solve the seismic problems for about 500-million dollars. That's less than half the current estimate.

Here's the catch: Mill says we've got to find money now and start upgrades right away to help keep kids safe. He figures it's going to take about 40-million a year over 15 years. On the bright side, he says the provincial government has been saying all the right things and seems amenable to the new strategy.