

Dear Prime Minister Martin and Premier Campbell:

I am writing to express my concern about the thousands of BC children who are attending school in buildings at high risk of suffering severe damage in a moderate to strong earthquake. The horror of recent events in South East Asia has reminded the parents of BC of the thin line that separates our lives from catastrophe. Children were disproportionately killed in the disaster.

A seismic assessment of BC schools was recently completed. The results of the assessment can be viewed at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/news/edufacts

311 of the 864 schools assessed, were thought to be at high risk of sustaining severe damage to structural elements in the event of a moderate to strong earthquake. This is disturbing.

I welcome Premier Campbell's recently announced \$ 1.5 billion commitment to complete upgrades to all seismically at-risk schools within 15 years. I want to be sure that it will happen, and would like to see the timeline speeded up with federal participation.

Government must take steps to ensure the promise is kept, regardless of political or economic shifts in this province. To ensure that this important commitment is maintained over the long term, I would like to see annual reporting, dedicated funding and legislation.

Parents feel strongly that this work must in no way compete for the same funds as the rest of the education budget. The two basic human rights of children: to an education and physical safety, must not compete for the same funds.

During the federal election, elected cabinet Ministers and MPs acknowledged that they agreed with parents that this was a safety and infrastructure issue, not an educational issue. I encourage the provincial government to seek a cost-sharing agreement with the federal government; such a partnership would be a powerful acknowledgement that the safety of our children is an important priority for all levels of government. It is my hope that a federal – provincial partnership could speed up the pace of the work to a 10-year time line.

As a nation, we must act locally and globally to actively mitigate known risks. I, along with other Families for School Seismic Safety supporters, look forward to hearing how our federal and provincial governments plan to ensure the seismic upgrade project is completed as rapidly as possible.

Yours truly,