
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2019EDUC0060-001345
June 27, 2019

Ministry of Education

Seismic upgrades, new classrooms to improve school for Vic High students

VICTORIA – Victoria High School students will soon have a safer learning environment with more classrooms, and the iconic exterior of the oldest high school in Western Canada will remain intact.

“Student safety is vitally important to our government, and so are the voices of people in our communities,” said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. “We’re investing in Vic High to give students a safer school, while ensuring a key part of Victoria’s history remains standing.”

The Government of B.C. is providing \$77.1 million for seismic upgrades and a 200-seat expansion of Vic High to keep students safe and ensure they are not attending an overcrowded school. The upgrade also meets another need in the community, as it includes a new neighbourhood learning centre for child care programs.

“Our community has long been waiting for this project to move forward, and I’m excited to know it’s being done in the best way possible,” said Carole James, MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill. “For over 100 years, Victoria High School has served families in our community. Today’s announcement of a safer school, more classrooms and new child care spaces will better support learners for decades to come.”

This project provides the safe school students deserve, while ensuring a key part of Victoria’s history will continue to stand. Exterior elements, such as terracotta, granite and brick masonry, will be retained. Interior features, including the marble and art glass in the main entrance and lobby, and the painted wood panels and art glass in auditorium/balcony, will also be preserved.

“We are thrilled to learn about the investment in Victoria High. This is great news for our students, staff and community,” said Jordan Watters, chair, Greater Victoria School Board. “We are able to seismically secure a school with a high level of need, create space for increasing enrolment in the Victoria High catchment, improve accessibility and add amenities that will benefit the whole community, all while preserving the heritage of this landmark that represents so much to so many. We are grateful that this remarkable 1914 building will be able to serve students for another 100 years.”

The Greater Victoria School District is contributing \$2.6 million to the project. Construction on the upgrades and expansion at Vic High is expected to begin in August 2020. Students will be re-located to a renovated SJ Willis Education Centre while the project is underway.

This will minimize disruption to students by contractors, and students will be in a safer school as soon as possible. The work on Vic High is scheduled to be complete by September 2022.

“This investment is truly remarkable and I’m very thankful to the Province for stepping up and

getting things done,” said Lisa Helps, mayor, City of Victoria. “The approach they’re taking shows they’ve really listened to the community. Safety is always the number 1 priority for students, but I know this heritage building is very special to the city and all the families who’ve had it as part of their lives.”

This investment is part of government’s work to accelerate the Seismic Mitigation Program and ensure every B.C. student is in a seismically safe school as soon as possible.

Since September 2017, the Province has approved about \$1.5 billion in school capital investments, including \$750 million for seismic upgrades at 37 schools. These investments mean that over 22,000 students are learning in safer schools throughout B.C.

Quick Facts:

- Victoria High School was built in 1914, with additions in 1955 and 2011.
- The 2011 block (the Fairey technical wing) meets current building codes and does not require upgrades.
- The total project budget of \$79.7 million includes the cost to renovate the SJ Willis Education Centre to provide temporary accommodation for Vic High students and for students in future seismic upgrade projects in Victoria.
- Since September 2017, the Government of B.C. has approved \$92.5 million for seismic upgrades at three schools in the Greater Victoria School District, including Victoria High, and Campus View and Braefoot Elementary schools.
- In the Capital Regional District, the Province has approved nearly \$350 million for school capital projects.
- Budget 2019 provides a record \$2.7 billion, including \$791 million for seismic upgrades, to continue this momentum.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Seismic Mitigation Program:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/capital/seismic-mitigation>

For more information about major school capital projects throughout B.C.:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/capital/major-capital-projects>

To connect with the Greater Victoria School District: <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/>

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