

January 7, 2019

The Honourable Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
PO Box 9045 Stn. Provincial Government
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fleming,

The Eric Hamber Secondary School Parent Advisory Council, would like to thank you for your extraordinary vision and commitment in providing a seismically safe, LEED Gold certified, state-of-the-art facility designed for optimizing 21st century learning for our children and generations of children to come. We are thrilled to be part of this mega-project!

I would like to bring to your attention three very serious deficiencies in the new school design that you may not be aware of that need to be included as they are of utmost importance to parents, teachers, students, as well as our extensive alumni community.

The first deficiency is the lack of usable gymnasium and outdoor recreational space in the new school. In the existing school, three gymnasiums, three additional smaller spaces not designed for physical activity, and three outdoor fields are fully utilized everyday with six physical education classes running concurrently every period, five days a week. The demand on these existing spaces is extremely high with countless extra-curricular internal and external teams and clubs all vying for space. Jules Verne Secondary also utilizes the adjacent field at Oak Meadows.

Eric Hamber has an outstanding athletic department. We house the only remaining public school football team (Provincial champions last year), the world champion junior dragonboat team, the largest Ultimate Program in the Province, as well as soccer, basketball, volleyball, badminton, field hockey, softball, tennis, track & field, cross-country, golf, and more. Over 700 students participate in extracurricular school athletics and over 1,200 in physical education classes. This is thanks in large part to our dedicated teachers and staff, but it is also made possible by the current gym space and outdoor facilities allowing for healthy, physical activities being accessible to all students. We also host city-wide sporting events on an annual basis.

In the proposed design for the new school there will be a 19% reduction in gym space as well as a drastic reduction in outdoor space. We will lose the running track used for track and field and cross-country, and two large fields used for football, ultimate, and soccer. During the 10-year period that the old school will be used as seismic mitigation swing space before being demolished, we will be sharing the one remaining smaller turf field with the swing school. This results in a substantial reduction of meaningful physical education opportunities for Hamber students, including access to scheduled classes and extra-curricular physical and challenging team-based experiences. As parents, we struggle to keep our teens active and school-based activities are often the only means to achieving this. It is unthinkable that the largest build of this kind in the city will not meet the needs of future generations of young people.

The second serious deficiency is the elimination of an auditorium or large gathering, performance, and multi-purpose space. To the parents, students, and community-at-large, this is a huge oversight and must be included in the design and build of the new school. The allocated 800 SM general use space in the new school does not meet the necessary requirements.

Currently Hamber houses exceptional Music, including several Bands, String orchestras, and Choirs, Drama and Performing Arts, Dance, and Fashion Departments involving hundreds of students. It is imperative that these Departments have a large performance space. Without an auditorium, over time, these departments will cease to exist. What is the point of producing a play or musical, having a band or orchestra, or a fashion show if you can't rehearse and perform together in front of a large audience in your own school environment?

The auditorium is a formal, dedicated classroom that unites the entire Hamber community and brings in the community-at-large. For example, every year there are Winter and Spring Band, Strings, and Choral concerts, Dance shows, a large-scale musical production ("My Fair Lady" in 2019), and a renowned fashion show put on by our award-winning Fashion Design Program. Hamber also hosts the District Band Festival, the VSB's International Choir Festival, Indigenous Awareness assemblies, the Poetry in Voice Provincial Competition, and various graduation events. These are all highly anticipated, well-attended community events that require an auditorium.

The third deficiency is the lack of space for Hamber's award-winning Fashion Design Program. It is one of the largest and most successful programs of its kind in the province with graduates going on to post-secondary and future careers in fashion and textile design. According to the THESA (Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association), the current BC Area Standards provided by the Ministry of Education does not adequately address the space required for the calibre of program currently available at Eric Hamber.

Parents were shocked and angered to learn that these essential spaces were not included in the new school design. It is our understanding that adequate gym, auditorium, and outdoor spaces were included in recently seismically-upgraded high schools like Kitsilano, Oak Bay, and New Westminster Secondary. We are concerned about the loss of potential rental income of tens of thousands of dollars each year without these spaces. In addition, the new Eric Hamber does not include NLC (Neighbourhood Learning Centre) space; a surprising development considering Kitsilano was allocated a 15% NLC. If you take into account our location along the Cambie corridor, proximity to Children's Hospital, and the massive future developments at Heather Lands, Oakridge Transit Centre site, and Oakridge Centre, one would anticipate a significant demand on our school and facilities, resulting in an expected substantial NLC.

In the past 16+ years there have been drastic cuts to programs and services to our public schools due to a lack of Provincial Government funding. Without including the proper facilities in the new school, it will mean a further cut to programs and services at Eric Hamber. There is now a chance to right the wrongs of the past and we can start by making the investment in infrastructure by building outstanding futuristic schools that cater to the changing needs and interests of our youth. Your government is making positive moves in this direction; however, this mega-project requires your immediate attention and foresight to "get it right" so future generations of young people can flourish in the 21st century.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Yada

Co-Chair, Eric Hamber Secondary PAC

cc: The Honourable George Heyman, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Strategy and MLA for Vancouver-Fairview