

August 1, 2019



Dear Minister Fleming,

I am writing to express my support for parents in Vancouver's South East False Creek community who are advocating for an elementary school to be built in their neighbourhood. Schools are the heart of any community, and the families in Olympic Village - of which there are now more than 1,400 - have struggled for far too long without a local school to call their own.

It is critically important that funding for an elementary school in Olympic Village be made available as soon as possible. The existing catchment school, Simon Fraser Elementary, is significantly over capacity and is receiving nearly three times the in-catchment applications for kindergarten than it can handle. Forcing families to choose schools well outside their neighbourhood undermines the connections between students, friends and neighbours that are the foundation of a thriving community. Many are simply giving up on the prospect of a school being built in time for their children to attend, and are moving to more established areas with existing schools. This is a disservice to Olympic Village residents and young families alike.

More than 1,300 families live in Olympic Village, but their children are attending more than two dozen schools throughout the city - exacerbating traffic congestion and air pollution. Vancouver is a leader in sustainable development, and is working to address climate change through the Greenest City Action Plan and the Climate Emergency Response. We know that the BC NDP also aim to be a leader in addressing climate change, promising in 2017 to reduce carbon pollution and protect the environment. Let's work together so these young families can take their children to a local school, protecting their safety and the sustainability of our city and province.

The City of Vancouver's Official Development Plan for South East False Creek anticipated an elementary school by 2020, information on which many residents built foundations and families in the neighbourhood. As a city, and together with the Vancouver School Board (VSB), we planned Olympic Village with a school to support a diverse, growing and vibrant community where individuals, families and children can thrive.

Last year, the VSB entered into an agreement with BC Hydro, selling a subsurface parcel at Lord Roberts Annex school site, to accommodate a much needed electrical substation in the West End/Downtown core. A portion of the proceeds from this sale will go toward building a new school in Coal Harbour. As a result of this Board decision, the Province no longer needs to fund this school and funding can be allocated to the Olympic Village Elementary.

The VSB is seeking Ministry approval for the site acquisition of South East False Creek-Olympic Village Elementary in Year One of its 2020/21 Capital Plan. I urge you to support this VSB request and to heed the calls from Olympic Village residents that a school is badly needed. The community has suggested a practical solution of trying a modular school if there are further delays. As a city, we have fulfilled our responsibility to ensure there is adequate and appropriate space for the learning needs of our youngest residents. It is time for the province to deliver on its promises to support education in B.C., to support young families and deliver the funding needed to put construction in motion for an Olympic Village school.

Please feel free to contact me at Lisa.Dominato@vancouver.ca or 604-754-7290 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa Dominato
Councillor
City of Vancouver

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CC

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