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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

### **New and improved schools on the way for New Westminster students**

NEW WESTMINSTER – Almost 800 students at two New Westminster elementary schools have a lot to look forward to, with today’s announcement of a full seismic replacement at Richard McBride and a seismic upgrade at École Lord Tweedsmuir.

“This government is working to get every student into a seismically safe school, and today we are one step closer,” said Education Minister Rob Fleming. “We are so pleased to be investing over \$28.7 million for two seismic projects in the New Westminster School District, ensuring students will be safe in the event of an earthquake.”

The Ministry of Education is providing \$22.6 million to build a new Richard McBride Elementary school, an immediate priority under the Province’s Seismic Mitigation Program. The new school will have three more classrooms to accommodate enrolment growth. There will be space for the existing StrongStart program within the school, and a Neighbourhood Learning Centre to accommodate the existing before- and after-school care programs, which are housed in a portable and an outbuilding.

Students will stay in the current building while the new Richard McBride school is being built. Once the new building is complete, the 89-year-old school will be demolished, and the three portables that are in use will be removed from the site. Construction is scheduled to begin in fall 2018, with completion anticipated in winter 2021.

“Students and parents at Richard McBride and Lord Tweedsmuir have been waiting a very long time for this. Nothing is more important than the safety of our children, and I am proud to be part of a government that is putting them first,” said Judy Darcy, MLA for New Westminster. “I look forward to watching the progress unfold on these important projects, which will serve our community for many years to come.”

École Lord Tweedsmuir Elementary also will be made safer for students with a \$6.1-million seismic upgrade. The school was built in 1937, with an additional classroom block added in 1943. The original portion of the school, including the gymnasium, is rated as having a high risk of failure in the event of a significant earthquake. Six portables will be brought in to accommodate students while the school is upgraded. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer, and expected to be complete in fall 2020.

“This is an extremely proud moment for our board, our district and our community,” said New Westminster Board of Education chair Mark Gifford. “We applaud the tremendous advocacy of parents, students and staff in raising their concerns, as well as government for giving the safety of our children, staff and families the urgent recognition it deserves. These projects affirm the right of our children to learn, grow and thrive in welcoming, inclusive and safe school

environments.”

The New Westminster School District already has replaced seismic high-risk John Robson with the new École Qayqayt Elementary, and has recently completed a seismic upgrade at F.W. Howay Elementary. When Lord Tweedsmuir and Richard McBride are complete, the district will have only one school left to be seismically upgraded – Hume Park.

Both of today’s projects were identified as priorities in the district’s 2017-18 Five-Year Capital Plan Submission. Both were the lowest-cost options for seismic mitigation.

Government is addressing the backlog of seismic and capital projects throughout B.C. to ensure students have safer learning environments. This includes encouraging collaboration between the Ministry of Education, school districts and local governments to meet ambitious timelines and reduce the time it takes to complete projects. Government is also working to cut wait times for school construction by accelerating the funding approval process.

Since September 2017, government has approved over \$220 million of capital funding to upgrade or replace 15 high-risk schools.

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