

# Combined Education Policy & Directions and Operations Policy & Planning Committee Meeting – December 7, 2020

## Questions and Answers

Q1

During the public consultation process for the Vic High seismic upgrade and subsequent matter of a Vic High land disposal, there was no mention of money flowing from the Vic High project to support the initiative at Burnside. All communication made public spoke of money from Vic High flowing to SJ Willis for swing space. Other than not wanting the public to be aware of the mismanagement of the Burnside project, why was there a lack of transparency in making this vital information available to the public during either the seismic upgrade or land disposal public consultations?

*Answer:*

*There was no mention of money flowing from the Vic High project to support the initiative at Burnside because this statement is not true.*

*The Vic High land exchange and long term lease will provide \$4.1m to \$4.5m revenue to School District No. 61. \$2.6m will be used for the cost share to bridge the seismic upgrade (renovation/more expensive) versus seismic replacement (new school/less expensive). The remaining \$1.5m to \$1.9m is earmarked for indoor and outdoor amenities at Vic High. 100% of the proceeds from the Caledonia development will be spent on Vic High.*

Q2

When will you make public an itemized budget that reveals and highlights the source of the \$2.6M funding shortfall?

*Answer:*

*There is no itemized budget for the \$2.6m. The \$2.6m is not a shortfall. The \$2.6m is the cost share to bridge the seismic upgrade (renovation/more expensive) versus seismic replacement (new school/less expensive). Through consultation, it was clear the community was interested in, and the Board supported, the renovation instead of a demolition and new build. The new build option Ministry funding was \$2.6m less than the upgrade (renovation). When a school district chooses the more expensive option, the Board must pay the difference.*

Q3

Please explain the ICA area. Will the ICA be operating out of Vic High? If so, why has the public not been notified? What financial arrangement has the School District made with the ICA for access to school rooms? Will they operate during school hours?

*Answer*

*The Inter-Cultural Association area is proposed to be a purpose built office and classroom/meeting room and would be co-located in Vic High with a separate entrance and alarm/security zoning. The District is anticipating approval of its Neighbourhood Learning Centre plan in February/March. Until the plan is approved, no financial arrangements have been discussed. Similarly hours of operation have not been*

*discussed but it is anticipated ICA will operate their regular office hours. Co-location will make services to students and families seamless as ICA is currently servicing students in Vic High on an on-going basis.*

Q4

*\*\*\*MOE Capital Bylaw represents the \$2,000,000 expected funding for the Burnside Project through the Vic High Seismic Project. This amount was verbally committed and later rescinded due to Burnside Project completion prior to Vic High funding announcement (Ministry unable to fund a completed project). It should be noted that the cash analysis used to determine the District's potential cash contribution for the Vic High Project was amended and resubmitted to the MOE to reflect that there would be \$2,000,000 less cash available to put towards that project."*

Please explain this financial arrangement more fully. It appears to me that funding for Burnside's upgrade was tagged on to Vic High's seismic upgrade budget and this was not disclosed to the public during consultations. How does the funding shortfall for Burnside impact Vic High's budget? Under what line item is Burnside's budget listed in Vic High's budget? Thank you.

*Answer*

*In any given major capital project, students are displaced during construction. The temporary space to house students during a construction project can be provided by "swing space" in another building off site, or portables on the same site as the construction project. The cost of renovating or preparing swing space or the cost of the portables on site form part of the request for funding from the Ministry and is approved in the overall project budget.*

*At the outset of the conceptualization of the Vic High seismic project, and as with any major capital project, SD61 staff knew that space would be required off the Vic High campus for two years during construction (also known as "swing space").*

*Before any Vic High Ministry funding was announced, staff and the Board determined it would fund the SJ Burnside year-long renovation project internally in order to prepare space for a pending announcement for Vic High renovation.*

*At the time this decision was made, SJ Willis was housing the Alternate, Continuing Education and Distributed Learning programs and needed to be moved. SJ Burnside was determined to be the future home of the programs and required an upgrade in order to house the programs and offer a quality learning environment to our students.*

*During the renovation of SJ Burnside, there were discussions with the Ministry relative to providing \$2,000,000 funding for SJ Burnside. The rationale was that if it had not been for preparing a swing space for Vic High student at SJ Willis, there would have been no reason to renovate SJ Burnside. Programs were displaced at SJ Willis thus causing SD61 to incur extraordinary costs to move them to SJ Burnside.*

*Because the District completed the SJ Burnside renovation before the Vic High seismic project funding announcement, the Ministry could not contribute to a completed project.*

*The cost share to bridge the seismic upgrade (renovation/more expensive) versus seismic replacement (new school/less expensive) was originally \$4.6m. In recognition of SD61's effort and expense to relocate programs from SJ Willis to SJ Burnside to create a Vic High swing space at SJ Willis, and knowing the*

*Ministry could not fund the SJ Burnside project because it was completed, the Ministry reduced the cost share to bridge the seismic upgrade versus the seismic replacement from \$4.6m to \$2.6m.*

*The funding shortfall for Burnside does not impact Vic High's seismic upgrade budget because the two are not related. Burnside was funded internally. Vic High is funded with Ministry capital funding. Vic High's budget is as it was announced and is not reduced as a result of the overage on Burnside.*

*SJ Burnside's budget is not listed in Vic High's budget because it is not part of the Vic High project.*

Q5

According to Sunday's Times-Colonist, Kim Morris said, "[T]he current scope of the stadium and track came about as a result of consultations, and that the ultimate decision on the larger stadium project was made prior to the 158-unit housing project coming along."

The public was not consulted about the proposed modifications to the Revitalized Stadium. Is Ms. Morris suggesting that she met with a private group? If so, what group? When did she meet with them? Please indicate who they are. Why was the public never consulted about these modifications when the public was encouraged to donate to the Revitalized Stadium?

Also, negotiations with the CRHC about the proposed lease and housing started in Aug 2017. Announcements for Phase 1 of the Revitalized Stadium were publicly announced in Jan. 2018. <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/first-strides-toward-vic-high-s-stadium-reno-1.23147660>

How is it that Ms. Morris makes the claim that "the ultimate decision on the larger stadium project was made prior to the 158-unit housing project coming along" when the timeline surrounding the Revitalization Project does not support these claims?

*Answer*

*Kim Morris started in the District in October 2019.*

*Vic High seismic upgrade first appeared on the District's Annual 5-Year Capital Plan in 2015 for the 2015/2016 year, and advanced to the Ministry's requirement for a Project Definition Report in 2018.*

*From the outset of the first five year annual capital plan, there was no Ministry funding for the stadium project.*

*Alumni began the concept of the stadium project in 2007/2008. In 2014 the City had committed \$250,000 to the stadium if matching funds could be secured.*

*By the January 2018 Times Colonist article, Alumni had secured \$500,000 of the \$7m required for the 4-phase project. In the January 2018 Times Colonist article, staff was supportive of the field. The District is seeking approval of Neighbourhood Learning Centre funding through the Vic High project, to install an artificial turf field.*

*Knowing that the Ministry does not fund outdoor amenities from seismic upgrade funding, and that the Alumni and associated partners had not been successful in fundraising at the time \$5m, now \$7m, for the stadium memorialization restoration project and track, District capital planning and finance staff at the time knew that it could not pay for the stadium and track 4-phase project.*

*Long before the Caledonia development project was introduced, there was not enough funding for the stadium upgrade and track.*

*The Board is supportive of community groups raising money for school amenities and lends its support in principle to many community groups. Alumnae do a great service to SD61 schools with their hard work and commitment. Lending support in principle is not a financial commitment, nor a commitment to consult. It is a level of support granted to an organization so that they may seek other funding such as grants etc. Alumni was not successful in its grant writing for which the Board gave it support in principle.*

*SD61 has not done any fundraising for the stadium nor the track, therefore cannot answer questions related to fundraising to date.*

*Further, the District consulted with parents, staff, students, community and alumni on amenities priorities in Winter 2019/2020, and again, due to funding, survey results did not return the stadium project as a high priority and was not recommended by staff for amenities spending approved by the Board in March 2020.*

Q6

As the need for the Burnside upgrade is linked to the Vic High upgrade I'm wondering how much money from the Vic High seismic upgrade grant is going towards the Burnside School upgrade and the SJ Willis upgrade? Is it possible to have the costs associated with the Burnside School upgrade and the SJ Willis upgrade shared equitably with the schools slated to use SJ Willis?

*Answer*

*There is no money from the Vic High seismic upgrade Ministry funding going towards the Burnside School upgrade. In the Vic High Ministry funding there is a \$6m budget for the SJ Willis upgrade.*

*To have the costs associated with the Burnside School upgrade and the SJ Willis upgrade shared equitably with the schools slated to use SJ Willis has not been discussed with the Ministry. By having the swing space now ready and available for future major capital construction project displacement of students, any future project funding should be lower than if the swing space were not already prepared, and may reduce the District's future costs to share the bridging of capital project options (upgrade/renovation vs new build). This is not verifiable at this time as there are no approved projects anticipated to use SJ Willis at this time.*