

Statement from VBE Trustee, Joy Alexander, at Board Meeting on January 25, 2016

I have been involved with the Vancouver School Board for almost 40 years – as an employee, when I was in private practice working with parents and students in the system and when my own children were in Vancouver schools. There were several times over those years that I wondered whether the board truly realized the ramifications of their decisions. Of course I am not referring to boards in very recent years but, as I said, over the past 40 years.

It is for that reason that I want to be very clear about what I realize about this decision we are making tonight in agreeing to work towards 95% capacity.

I realize -

1. That a yes vote for this decision has the potential of closing 20 or 21 schools in our district – either through direct closures, or by using them as swing space and then closing them.
2. That a yes vote has the potential to interfere with more than 3 dozen classrooms that are being used for art and music. Some of those classrooms have been used for the arts for over 30 years but they are now deemed excess capacity.
3. That a yes vote devalues our Adult Ed programme because spaces used for Adult Ed are considered excess capacity.
4. That a yes vote devalues our Special Ed programme. We have chosen, for what I consider very good educational reasons, to run many on our special ed classes with fewer children in them. Fewer children in the classroom is considered excess capacity.
5. That a yes vote puts some child care facilities at risk because although they are renting space from the Vancouver School those rooms are considered excess capacity.
6. That we are currently operating at near to 85% capacity.
7. That there is an economic as well as an educational argument to be made to increase capacity – to 88, 89 or even 90%.
8. That there is a short term economic argument to be made for running at 95% capacity.
9. There is NO sound educational reason for running a school district at 95% capacity particularly given the manner in which operating capacity is being defined.
10. The government of BC has indicated that they will not give us any capital money unless we demonstrate how we could reach 95% capacity.
11. That without money from the government we cannot proceed with seismic upgrades of our schools (as well as overdue maintenance).
12. That without capital input from the BC government the children of Vancouver will remain in seismically unsafe schools even longer.
13. Therefore that the BC government has given me no choice but to vote in favour of this recommendation.

*Dr. Joy Alexander, Registered Psychologist
School Trustee*