

**NEW WESTMINSTER SCHOOL BOARD URGED TO “DO THE RIGHT THING”
AND “TELL THE WHOLE STORY,” SAYS VOICE NEW WESTMINSTER LETTER**

New Westminster, BC – Voice New Westminster has written an open letter to the New Westminster School Board School urging them “to do the right thing” and provide the community with “the complete story” surrounding an April 26, 2005 asbestos release incident at New Westminster Secondary School, an incident resulting from the demolition of Room 138.

“During the past ten days, we’ve been reviewing a mountain of highly disturbing material obtained by our organization,” said Voice New Westminster President Blair Armitage, “including a 1991 ‘Asbestos Hazard Evaluation’ of the high school completed by Astech Consultants Ltd.”

“It has become abundantly clear to us that the Trustees must immediately, and without delay, take steps to provide the students, their parents and the District’s employees and teachers with the full and complete story surrounding the demolition of Room 138 on April 26th, 2005 and the asbestos cloud it generated.”

Voice New Westminster’s letter to the New Westminster School Board also points out that the scope of the recently released WorkSafe BC Review Decision relating to the April 26, 2005 asbestos incident was limited to the workers who were exposed and therefore the report does not extend to the students who were also exposed to the cloud of asbestos dust on April 26, 2005. Many facts about this asbestos incident have therefore not yet been addressed, particularly the health risks to the students and teachers who were also exposed to the asbestos in addition to the workers.

“Trustees have a legally mandated ‘Duty of Care’ to the school children placed in their trust and the Trustees have clearly failed in this case,” said Armitage. “The District was clearly aware that the April 26, 2005 asbestos cloud contaminated the corridor outside Room 138 and that it entered the ventilation system of the school. Yet instead of issuing a general alert to all parents and students, and directly notifying parents of the children who were in the corridor outside of Room 138, the District chose to minimize things by publicly stating the demolition work had been completed before the staff and students were present in the building.”

“Openness and transparency did not take place in April of 2005 or in the weeks following and Voice New Westminster is strongly encouraging the School Board to do the right thing now and tell the whole story.”

Voice New Westminster is a newly-formed New Westminster civic electors group comprised of residents from all parts of the city and sharing a common vision for New Westminster.

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Attachments & Online References

- Letter to the Board of School Trustees c/o Michael Ewen
- NWSS Facility Study Appendices: “Asbestos Hazard Evaluation,” Astech Consultants Ltd.
- News Release
- *Voice New Westminster* Vision, Mission, Values Statement

For more information, please contact Blair Armitage 604-526-7794;
blair.armitage@gmail.com