

**VOICE NEW WESTMINSTER**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**APPALLING CONDITIONS AT HIGH SCHOOL NEGATIVELY AFFECTING  
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND STAFF MORALE, SAYS TEACHERS' REPORT**

New Westminster, BC – A draft report obtained by *Voice New Westminster* provides a shocking glimpse into the deteriorating conditions at New Westminster Secondary School and the poor working and learning conditions created by a partial tear-down of sections of the school and a failure by the school board to adequately maintain the remaining sections of the existing school.

The draft report, prepared by the New Westminster Teachers' Union, is based on the findings of a member survey conducted at the high school in early December.

The Teachers' Union report points to frequent sightings of rats and mice, rodent feces, silverfish infestations, mold and damp conditions, water leaking through ceilings, non-operational fire alarms and classrooms being too hot or too cold to effectively teach and learn in. The report also raises concerns about the unsightly appearance of the half demolished school and its grounds which have been described as a "moonscape." The report states that staff morale is "extremely low" and that the high school is a "depressing" place to be—"the entire exterior is an eyesore."

"The project to replace New Westminster Secondary School has been a major fiasco since the beginning and we should all be concerned about the ability of our local school district to handle its business" says Blair Armitage, President of Voice New Westminster. "The replacement project is on hold while Minister of Education-appointed Douglas Hibbins investigates the capital project and gets it back on track."

Hibbins, a former Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, also conducted the review of BC's School District Business Companies for Education Minister Shirley Bond, a review which focused to a great extent on the New Westminster School District's money-losing Business Company.

"It appears the school board thought they could pressure the province into increasing the budget by prematurely tearing down sections of the existing high school," says Armitage. "They're playing politics. And it's our kids and our teachers who are losing. We are greatly concerned with the health and safety issues that have resulted."

*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

- NWTU draft report – Capital Project Survey Summary
- <http://bctf.ca/nwtu/>
- *Voice New Westminster* Vision, Mission, Values Statement

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