



# **FEEDBACK SUMMARY REPORT**

**VSB Consultations for the BC Hydro  
West End Substation Proposal**

**June 15, 2018**

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# INTRODUCTION

This document provides a summary of the feedback received from Vancouver School Board (VSB) stakeholders, parents and West End residents regarding BC Hydro’s proposal to purchase land from VSB in order to build an underground substation at the Lord Roberts Annex property in the West End. Feedback was collected, analyzed and summarized by The C&E Group, an independent consulting firm specializing in communications and engagement for public infrastructure projects.

The proposal from BC Hydro qualifies as a land disposal for VSB. The decision the Board will make about this proposal will be a decision to pass a bylaw for land disposal. The Ministry of Education requires the Board to show that a fair consideration of the community’s input and adequate opportunity for the community to respond to the Board’s plan for the property was provided.

VSB and BC Hydro agreed that BC Hydro would conduct community consultations for this proposal focusing on residents and the wider community, and VSB would organize and host targeted consultations with VSB stakeholders and school communities (which includes parents and residents). BC Hydro and VSB staff attended and participated in each other’s events. This document provides a summary of the VSB consultations and is being submitted to VSB Trustees along with BC Hydro’s Community Consultation Report.

# STRATEGY

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this community engagement was to consult with VSB stakeholders and school communities on BC Hydro’s proposal. The feedback obtained in the consultation would help VSB Trustees decide whether or not to accept the proposal. The specific objectives of the VSB consultations were to:

- Inform VSB stakeholders and school communities about the BC Hydro substation project proposal
- Collect feedback from VSB stakeholders and school communities on the proposed project
- Summarize the feedback into a report for Trustees to help inform their decision

## AUDIENCES

The audiences for the VSB consultations included:

Group	Description
Stakeholders	Employee groups, Vancouver District Student Council and District Parent Advisory Committee (DPAC)
Parents	Parents of current and future students at Lord Roberts Annex and Lord Roberts Elementary
Residents	Local residents in the West End which includes current and future parents at the schools

## EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The VSB consultation period ran from April 12 to June 10 and included the following three events:

- May 2 VSB stakeholder workshop
- May 23 VSB school meeting at Lord Roberts Annex
- May 30 VSB school meeting at Lord Roberts Elementary

Each of these meetings was facilitated by The C&E Group with staff and consultants from VSB and BC Hydro available to answer questions. VSB Trustees also attended these events to listen to the feedback. BC Hydro provided a 20-30 minute presentation at the May 2 stakeholder workshop and at the May 23 school meeting at the Annex. Phillip Ryan, a resident, politician and future parent of Lord Roberts Annex was invited by the Annex PAC Chair to give a 20-minute presentation at the May 23 meeting to express his concerns about the safety risks of substations. These include electric and magnetic fields (EMF), fires and explosions. There were no presentations at the May 30 school meeting at Lord Roberts Elementary in response to feedback and observations from previous meetings that attendees wanted more time to ask their specific questions.

VSF provided the following two opportunities for written feedback:

- VSB email: [LRProposal@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:LRProposal@vsb.bc.ca) (available on the VSB website from April 12 to June 10)
- VSB feedback forms given out at the two school meetings

BC Hydro ran their community consultation from May 1-31 and included two open houses (May 1 and 17), four small group discussions (May 3, 7, 10, 15), an online survey, paper feedback forms, an email and a phone number. VSB staff and consultants attended the six consultation events in order to observe, listen to feedback and answer questions as needed. Full details of BC Hydro’s community consultations are provided in their Community Consultation Report.

## ADVERTISING AND NOTIFICATIONS

VSF sent email invitations directly to stakeholder groups, and sent emails and flyers directly to parents via the vice principal at Lord Roberts Annex and the principal at Lord Roberts Elementary. BC Hydro distributed more than 25,000 flyers to residents within a 4-block radius of Lord Roberts Annex and the proposed location for the future Coal Harbour school. These residents include both current and future parents of the two schools as well as Lord Roberts Elementary. Table 1 provides a summary of the number of direct notifications sent out to the different groups.

**Table 1 – Number of notifications sent out**

Group	Method	# Sent
Parents at Lord Roberts Annex	Event flyer/principal emails	~300
Parents at Lord Roberts Elementary	Event flyer/principal emails	~1,000
VSF stakeholders	Email invitation	16
Residents (includes current and future parents)	BC Hydro flyers	25,700
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>~27,000</b>

In addition, information about the project and the consultations was made available via:

- VSB and BC Hydro joint news releases
- BC Hydro advertisements in local newspapers
- BC Hydro pop-up events
- BC Hydro discussion guides available at eight community gathering places in the West End
- VSB and BC Hydro websites and social media channels

# RESULTS

## PARTICIPATION RATES

A total of 41 people attended the two school meetings; 20 at the May 23 meeting at Lord Roberts Annex and 21 at the May 30 meeting at Lord Roberts Elementary. Eight stakeholder groups attended the VSB workshop on May 2 representing the following organizations:

- VESTA (Vancouver Elementary Teachers Association)
- VSTA (Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association)
- DPAC (District Parent Advisory Council)
- IUOE (International Union of Operating Engineers)
- VDSC (Vancouver District Student’s Council)
- CUPE 15

Table 2 shows a breakdown of these attendance numbers and the participation rate they represent based on the number of direct invitations that were sent.

**Table 2 – Attendance at VSB events**

Date	Opportunity	# Attended
May 2	VSB Stakeholder Meeting	8 (50%)
May 23	VSB School Meeting – Annex	20 (~7%)
May 30	VSB School Meeting – Elementary	20 (~2%)

In terms of written feedback, VSB received a total of 80 unique emails to the [LRProposal@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:LRProposal@vsb.bc.ca) and directly to Trustees, plus five feedback forms from the two school meetings (Table 3). Of the 80 emails, approximately 25 (31%) were from parents, 40 (50%) were from residents and the remainder were from people who did not identify themselves specifically as either a parent or resident.

**Table 3 – Responses to emails and feedback forms**

Dates	Methods	# Received
May 1 – June 10	VSB emails	80
May 23, 30	VSB paper feedback forms	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>85</b>

## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Following is a summary of the key questions and comments provided by stakeholders, parents and residents at the three VSB events and through emails and feedback forms.

### Stakeholders

At the VSB stakeholder workshop on May 2, stakeholders asked several general questions about the proposal, covering different health and safety issues, the commitments that BC Hydro and VSB would be making, the project timeline, the potential impacts on students, sources of funding and what the money would be put toward. There was an even distribution of questions and comments among the different topic areas. Two stakeholders made the following specific statements at the workshop:

#### Rory Brown, VSTA:

Rory Brown gave context by explaining that his organization felt threatened by last year's proposal, due to the political situation at the time. He said that as stewards of the public education system, they have witnessed 16 years of the provincial government's use of public spaces as a "piggy bank" and in that context, using a school facility without clearly defining the benefits was threatening, particularly because the Board was chosen by the government and the BC Hydro proposal was seen as another way to take something away from the public. As for the present, he said he appreciated the questions asked, but that VSTA still has concerns – and that it comes down to a cost/benefit analysis for the students in Vancouver.

#### Chloe McKnight, VESTA:

Chloe McKnight pointed out that her organization's members are also BCTF members and their current position is they are against the idea of substations under schools. Another frustration, she said, is that the West End is "bursting at the seams" and the Ministry is not funding schools in that area, as is their job.

### Parents and Residents

A total of 280 questions and comments were made by parents and residents via the two school meetings, the five feedback forms and the 80 emails. Of the emails and feedback forms received, 11 people (14%) explicitly stated they supported the proposal, 60 people (74%) explicitly stated they opposed the proposal, and the remaining nine people (11%) did not explicitly state their support or opposition. The top five topics, representing 75% of the 280 questions and comments made from parents and residents were:

- Construction impacts
- Electric and magnetic fields (EMF)
- Other health and safety concerns
- The money should be guaranteed to go toward a new Annex and Coal Harbour/West End/King George schools
- General requests for the substation to be located somewhere else

Table 4 provides a breakdown of all the different topics raised and their frequency.

**Table 4 – Topics from parents and residents**

Topic areas	#	%
Construction impacts	83	29%
EMF	37	13%
Other health and safety concerns	35	13%
Guarantee that the money will go towards the Annex and Coal Harbour schools	32	11%
General requests for the substation to be located somewhere else	25	9%
The Ministry should be funding new schools	20	7%
Decision/planning process (decision criteria, this consultation process, future consultations, final plans/designs)	17	6%
How will this affect the catchments and school capacity?	13	5%
The amount of money VSB is getting	10	4%
There should be additional benefits to the school/community (e.g. free hydro)	5	2%
No astro turf	3	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Construction impacts

The most frequent topic raised by parents and residents, particularly via the emails, was the concern for potential construction impacts. These include:

- Damage to and/or limited or no use of Nelson Park during the long construction period. Many people stated how important the park is to the community and the green space it provides to all residents in the West End
- Noise, traffic, dust and views of the construction
- The long timeline for construction
- The removal of trees from Nelson Park
- The removal of and/or limited access to the playground in the park (not the one in the school) which many families use
- Children having to go to a school further away (Coal Harbour)



At the school meetings, both BC Hydro and VSB explained that there would be additional extensive consultation with parents and residents during the planning and design phase of this project should it proceed. These would include consultations on ways to help mitigate the impacts of construction and to help inform the design of the new school and field/park area.

## EMF

The most frequent topic raised by parents at the two school meetings, as well as via some of the emails, was electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Many of these questions were general questions about EMF to clarify the information BC Hydro had provided. However, a few people were very outspoken about their concerns about EMF and the levels that BC Hydro is saying are safe. In summary:

- BC Hydro says EMF levels would be from the underground transmission cables only and would be 100mG (Milligauss) at peak loads, and 25mG 95% of the time; well below the guideline of 2000mG set by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and endorsed by the World Health Organization and Health Canada.
- The few vocal parents indicated they have read that EMF levels should be much less, e.g., 3-4mG as recommended by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

At the school meetings, BC Hydro staff and consultants, including EMF experts and Stantec, answered questions and addressed concerns by referencing the EMF information on pages 14 and 15 of the BC Hydro Discussion Guide. They also provided additional information on the validity of different research studies done on EMF.

## Other health and safety concerns

Many people at the school meetings, as well as via the emails, had questions and comments about health and safety concerns other than EMF. This included concerns about earthquakes, fires and explosions. At the two school meetings, BC Hydro answered these questions referencing their information on substation safety on page 13 of their Discussion Guide.

## The money should be guaranteed to go towards a new Annex and Coal Harbour/West End/King George

Many of the parents who attended the two school meetings and submitted emails and feedback forms requested a guarantee from VSB that the money from this property disposition would go toward a new Annex and Coal Harbour school. As well, many of these parents also said they wanted any money that is left over to go toward upgrading King George Secondary School. A few of these parents explicitly said they support this project with BC Hydro so long as VSB can guarantee the money will go toward schools in the West End. Associate Superintendent David Nelson told parents over the course of the two school meetings:

- The money from this deal will go toward building Coal Harbor and rebuilding a new school on the current site of the Annex, which will likely be a K-7 school.
- Any leftover money will be kept in the District, but is not necessarily guaranteed at this point to stay in the West End. That is up to the Trustees to decide.

#### General requests for the substation to be located somewhere else

Many of the questions and comments received were asking if the station could be located elsewhere and/or why this location was chosen. At the school meetings, BC Hydro answered these questions referencing their information on page 13 of their Discussion Guide that explains the only alternative is an above-ground station three to four blocks away, but still in the West End. As well, BC Hydro also provided additional information such as:

- The rigorous building standards that would have to be met by any structure on top of the substation would make it unfeasible (too expensive) for any developer to want to build a residential or commercial building.
- The need to keep electricity flowing means the current West End Dal Grauer substation must be kept in operation while a new station is built and cannot be repurposed to meet the West End's energy and power needs.
- Building elsewhere in the West End would mean expropriating land from residents and tearing down houses.

# CONCLUSION

Approximately 120 parents and residents and eight stakeholder groups have provided feedback to VSB regarding BC Hydro's proposal. Over 27,000 direct notifications were sent out, including BC Hydro's mailer to 25,700 West End residents which includes parents at both Lord Roberts Annex and Lord Roberts Elementary.

VSB stakeholders asked general questions about the proposal, with representatives from VSTA and VESTA providing specific statements about their organization's position on substations under schools and the funding of public education. Parents and residents raised more than 280 questions and comments about the proposal, with the top five topics being:

- Construction impacts
- Electric and magnetic fields (EMF)
- Other health and safety concerns
- The money should be guaranteed to go toward a new Annex and Coal Harbour/West End/King George schools
- General requests for the substation to be located somewhere else

Based on the feedback received, VSB Trustees may wish to consider using the following questions and considerations to help inform their decision on whether or not to accept BC Hydro's proposal:

- What can VSB and BC Hydro do to **minimize the potential construction impacts** to the community? What guarantee can BC Hydro offer to minimize impacts to parents and residents during construction? Are there different construction methodologies that could reduce impacts? Shorten the timeline? How much can the community be involved in the planning, design and land restoration process?
- Does VSB believe and trust the **knowledge, expertise and research of BC Hydro**, its experts and consultants with regards to safe levels of EMF? Does VSB trust the regulatory bodies that provide these guidelines and standards to BC Hydro?
- Does VSB believe and trust that BC Hydro has done the work to ensure **minimal to no risk of any other health and safety issues** such as fire, explosions or hazardous effects from earthquakes?
- Can VSB guarantee that **a new school on the Annex site and Coal Harbour will be built** from the money from this land sale? Can VSB guarantee that any money left over will go toward schools in the West End, namely King George? Can BC Hydro offer any additional benefits to the West End community as part of this project?
- How can VSB continue to work with the Ministry to ensure a **fair balance of funding** for new schools? How can VSB ensure that this project does not preclude the Ministry from fulfilling their obligations for funding new schools in Vancouver?