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NEWS RELEASE

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Improvements needed in planning for school seismic safety

VICTORIA – "Although the Ministry of Education and its partners have done a good job in developing technical guidelines for upgrading the seismic safety of schools, there are still significant challenges ahead if full implementation of the program is to succeed" said Auditor General John Doyle in his report released today, *Planning for Seismic Safety in Schools*.

Nearly 750 schools in 39 school districts have been identified by the ministry as requiring seismic upgrades. "The original budget of $1.5 billion will not be enough to remediate all the schools included in the ministry's plan," said Doyle. "The ministry needs to develop a strategy to deal with significant increases in construction costs that have undermined the real purchasing power of the original budget," he said.

"There are a number of competing priorities when it comes to upgrading schools. I've recommended the ministry integrate seismic upgrading into its long-term capital planning," said Doyle.

The report notes that the ministry is not providing the public and stakeholders with information to help them understand how program choices are made, and recommends the Ministry of Education work with boards of education to develop an information plan.

This first report on school seismic safety focussed on the Ministry's management of the Seismic Mitigation Program. The Auditor General's next review of this program will focus on implementation by the ministry and boards of education.

The report contains a total of seven recommendations to improve the management of the school Seismic Mitigation Program.

The report is available on the Auditor General's website www.bcauditor.com.

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2008/09 Report #12 – Planning for School Seismic Safety

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A copy of the full report is available on our website at: **www.bcauditor.com**