

# Robert & Carol Friesen

"s.22(1) Personal and Confidential"

January 16, 2018

Honorable Mayor and Council,  
City Hall,  
Vancouver, B.C.

## **Re: York House Rezoning**

This submission focuses on the most important issues for our family:

- (a) traffic congestion and safety; and
- (b) permitted uses of the YHS property.

### **Traffic Congestion & Safety**

The proposed YHS expansion would greatly exacerbate the serious traffic and safety issues we already face in our neighborhood. YHS does make an effort to control traffic around its designated drop off and pick up zones. However, YHS parents are an aggressive and impatient group of business persons and professionals. Many feel entitled to ignore traffic management pledges. In their rushed lives, YHS parents frequently ignore both YHS traffic management plans and City traffic signs and bylaws.

Here are but a few examples of the traffic issues we face:

- YHS has posted "No Parking" signs on the south side of 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue to improve traffic flow and safety. At drop off and pick up time on most school days, the south side of 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue is filled with parked cars. Many YHS parents are not prepared to accept the inconvenience of a slightly longer walk so they simply ignore YHS traffic management signs.
- YHS parents routinely drop off children on the south-bound lanes of Granville Street between King Edward Boulevard (25<sup>th</sup> Ave.) and 26<sup>th</sup> Ave. That block of Granville Street is either a bus stop or it is posted "No Stopping" by the City. Again, some parents feeling pressured by the slow pace of traffic around the school, are prepared to engage in very dangerous and illegal driving practices in complete violation of the traffic laws.
- Nanton Avenue is a designated bicycle route with high usage by the cyclers. It is the width of a normal city street. During school drop off and pick up hours, both sides of the street are filled with parked cars. That makes it difficult for cars going in opposite directions to pass each other. Weaving their way between moving automobiles going in both directions and parking is a large number of cyclists. This is a very dangerous mix.

- King Edward Avenue, a major east / west artery is frequently backed up a kilometer from the school drop off area to Arbutus Avenue.

Even without the proposed YHS expansion, both Nanton Avenue and King Edward Avenue are destined to become much more congested as new residents in the hundreds of condominiums under construction on the Arbutus shopping mall site become occupied. Those two Avenues will become main routes for many residents travelling from the Arbutus mall site to points east and to downtown.

The Bunt Transportation Study (the “Study”) attached to the YHS plan does not identify the serious address traffic and safety issues our neighborhood already faces as a result of three large schools: YHS, Little Flower Academy, and Shaughnessy Elementary School, all in close proximity to each other. The Study could create the impression that as part of the YHS rezoning application, serious consideration was given to traffic and safety issues. However, upon careful reading, it becomes obvious that no meaningful work has been done (see the Appendix for details).

### School Use

The rezoning that allowed YHS to expand in 2005 restricted YHS’s use of its facilities. Use is limited to school purposes. That restriction was included in the rezoning because prior to 2005, YHS rented its facilities to third parties. Since YHS lacked infrastructure in the form of parking and traffic management, its rental operations imposed an onerous burden on the neighborhood. Our streets were often jammed until 10 or 11 pm.

YHS had a very long history of poor neighborly behavior. Council recognized the legitimacy of the neighbors’ concerns and added the restriction.

The only apparent reason for YHS asking that the restriction on usage be removed is so that it can restart its rental business. That would be unreasonable and unfair to YHS’s neighbors because:

1. If Council grants YHS permission to proceed with its expansion, Council will have bestowed on the YHS parents, development rights having a market value of many tens of millions of dollars – possibly \$100 million. The right to construct a huge facility without having to buy any land is a large gift to a small group of already wealthy parents.
2. YHS pays no taxes and the development charges the City will receive are negligible in relation to the value of the benefits the YHS parents will enjoy.
3. If YHS is allowed to rent its facilities, Council would be bestowing an additional gift: the right to run a commercial business in a residential neighborhood. Vancouver citizens are generally prohibited from running commercial businesses in residential neighborhoods for good reasons. YHS should not be an exception. YHS should not be given the right to destroy its neighbors’ enjoyment of their homes during evenings and weekends and

summer vacation periods. After completion of the expansion, YHS will have two gymnasiums, a theater, a cafeteria and spacious hallways. These facilities will be highly marketable.

4. By YHS's own estimates, YHS's own evening and weekend events are likely to attract as many as 6,200 persons annually to the school. This is in addition to those attracted to events at the two adjacent schools. YHS's infrastructure, that of the other two schools, and the overflow parking in the neighborhood cannot accommodate this traffic flow without massive congestion and disruption. We know from our pre-2005 experiences that the streets will again become clogged with cars and strangers, many of whom have no consideration for the neighborhood, until 10 or 11 pm many nights, on weekends and during vacation periods. Our neighborhood will suffer for the purpose of reducing school fees for an elite group of parents who are more than capable of paying their way.

### **Our Request to Council**

1. For the reasons set out above, we request that Council not approve the proposed YHS rezoning.
2. However, if Council does decide to allow the YHS rezoning, **it is very important that the restriction on school use contained in the present zoning be retained.**

Yours truly,

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Robert Friesen

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Carol Friesen

## Appendix

### Bunt Transportation Study (the “Study”)

For the reasons set out below, the 72 page Study attached to the rezoning application is a seriously flawed document. It should be noted that the first page is marked “Draft”. Obviously the author believed the Study to be incomplete and subject to corrections.

The Study is based upon traffic numbers on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (see Exhibit 3 and page 10). Bunt asserts (without any statistical support) that nothing has changed between then and now. Our neighborhood experience is that the Bunt assertion is incorrect. We have experienced a significant increase, particularly on King Edward Avenue and on Granville Street.

Accessing Granville Street northbound and King Edward eastbound during morning drop off is a serious problem. Our neighborhood frequently waits up to 10 minutes accessing King Edward.

Buried in the detail of the Report (but not highlighted) is the fact that the King Edward / Granville intersection was already at or over capacity during drop off and pick up times in 2014 (page 14, Table 3.3). This should be a serious consideration for Council if we are concerned about building a livable city. How can traffic possibly move once Granville Street and King Edward become built up with condos?

The Report also does not mention the large increase in traffic that can be expected in the neighborhood as the hundreds of condominiums under construction on the Arbutus Mall site are completed and occupied. East bound and downtown bound vehicles from the Arbutus Mall site will significantly increase traffic flow on Nanton and King Edward Avenues, on Granville Street and on the side streets that are used to access them.

The area studied in the Report is but a fraction of the area that is seriously impacted by YHS operations. For example, to the south of the school, the area studied goes only one block south of YHS to Nanton Avenue. The reality is that the YHS operations impact a much larger area extending as far south as 33 rd Avenue. Many parents drop off and pick up on 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. and to the south of 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. on Alexandra Street.

The Report says that 61% of pupils arrive by car. That is 360 cars (present enrolment of 600 x 61%) for YHS alone. When one adds similar numbers for Little Flower Academy and Shaughnessy Elementary, the total comes to 950 cars delivering students plus teacher cars cramming local streets and arterial intersections every morning and afternoon.

The Report contains a massive amount of data. However, its Conclusions and Recommendations are weak and based on outdated and inaccurate vehicle numbers. It has no meaningful recommendations and no solutions other than the Good Neighbor Pledge. We know from experience, that many YHS parents feel no obligation to comply with a pledge given by the school.