



March 30, 2018

To: Councillor Carmichael Greb, Armour Heights Public School Principal Corey Birnbaum, TDSB Trustee Jennifer Arp

Re: Pedestrian safety in the area of Armour Heights Public School

The South Armour Heights Residents' Association ("SAHRA") is an incorporated non-profit association founded in 1988 that represents 850 households in the Toronto area bordered by Highway 401 on the north, Brooke Avenue on the south, Yonge Boulevard on the east and Avenue Road on the west.

In her March 1 newsletter, Councillor Carmichael Greb raised the issue of pedestrian safety in school zones. **SAHRA is writing to advise that it continues to be concerned about pedestrian safety, including that of schoolchildren, in the area immediately adjacent to Armour Heights Public School.**

During 2016, following concern expressed by members of the community, SAHRA raised this issue, together with the issues of traffic congestion and on-street parking, at a meeting with Corey Birnbaum, the school's principal, and with Councillor Carmichael Greb's office. The Councillor's office arranged for a site visit on June 7, 2017, which was attended by Councillor Carmichael Greb, Jonathan Kent (the Councillor's Constituency Assistant), City Traffic Engineer Shawn Dartsh, Corey Birnbaum and me.

In summary, the outcome of these meetings was:

- Pedestrian safety: no action planned by the city or the school
- Traffic congestion: no action planned by the city or the school
- On-street parking: the city would consider changing parking signs if a majority of the immediate neighbourhood, and the school, agreed to the changes.

Please note that although SAHRA views all three of these issues as worthy of attention, pedestrian safety is the most important and is the single one we are addressing in this letter.

In the last couple of months, two schoolchildren have been killed in vehicular incidents close to their respective schools, within the City of Toronto. The Star reported that 14 pedestrians had been killed in 2018 as of March 6. Mayor Tory has called it a "crisis."

As well as being a board member of SAHRA, I am a professional engineer who has worked in heavy industry and the chemical industry for over 40 years. My work currently is in the area of Process Safety Management, which primarily concerns reducing the risk of large industrial explosions and releases to the environment. (Think of the Deepwater Horizon or the disaster at Lac Megantic.) The frequency of these events is low but their consequences can be high and often tragic. Because of the low frequency, every incident, no matter how small, is studied so





that lessons can be learned and countermeasures put in place with a view to preventing a high-consequence event, and / or mitigating its outcome.

Usually incidents occur only when a number of safety items, or layers of protection, all fail concurrently. These layers can be as varied as programmed interlocks which automatically prevent incidents, to "operational discipline" in which individuals follow procedures to the letter.

I expect that traffic engineers work in similar ways, building layers of protection into designs.

Incidents occur when not enough layers of protection have been designed, when the design did not meet the expected safety levels, when individuals have poor operational discipline by failing to follow the laws to the road, etc.

Sometimes layers of protection are compromised by competing priorities. Sometimes layers don't exist because different organisations have inadequate communication between them or do not understand each other.

No one expected the deaths of the children mentioned above. Yet it happened. Did the expected layers of protection fail? Did they never exist? Was operational discipline poor? Were there competing priorities within the city or the school board – or between them? Was there inadequate communication between the city and the school board? Did they not understand each other?

**SAHRA is calling upon the city and the school board to investigate, separately and together as appropriate, to answer these questions, not only for vehicular incidents where death or injury was the consequence, but for lesser incidents as well. By taking appropriate countermeasures, both the frequency and the consequences of incidents will be reduced which will result in less risk to the public.**

SAHRA applauds the considerable effort put toward the safety of pedestrians near Allenby Junior Public School. Armour Heights Public School is an elementary school also located on a busy arterial route and needs similar attention. We hope that the recently announced Vision Zero Road Safety Plan for school zones will include a study of improvements that can be taken near the school as well as on the school grounds, together with their implementation.

At the site meeting mentioned above, SAHRA brought forward several ideas to reduce the risk to pedestrians. SAHRA stands ready to discuss these ideas once more, should there be interest.

Jim Sadler, P.Eng.  
SAHRA Vice-president

cc: SAHRA (Sheila Dunlop, Bob Williams, Gary Langdon, Ron Johnson), Ken Sutton, Lynne O'Brien, Armour Heights Public School Family and School Association