Submission Re: UBC Land Use Plan Amendment – Regional Context Statement

To whom it may concern:

The AMS would like to express its confusion regarding the current state of its revised regional context statement. It would appear that UBC has decided to not include students as residents of UBC, regardless of lease tenure. We are of the view that students who live anywhere on campus on a year round basis should be considered residents of UBC. We do not necessarily disagree with the notion that students who live on campus on an 8-month basis might be considered residents of wherever their parents reside. However, since the continuous occupancy rate of residence rooms in the fall and winter is quite high, we are also of the view that the number of this category of students should be provided prominently in all official planning documents. We would particularly like the university to include, as is the case with UBC’s “permanent” residents, the projected total increase of students by 2021 and beyond.

The AMS is of the view that all students should be included in the population counts of UBC’s planning documents because this will help the university’s partners, including Metro Vancouver and TransLink, to provide adequate infrastructure and services for this area. To use but one example: Not having the total current and projected number of students actually living on campus during the fall and winter months could prevent TransLink from providing and continuing to provide adequate levels of services within or to and from campus. This is of particular concern at off-peak hours (evenings and weekends), since the number of potential riders within UBC at these times would be systematically underestimated for at least 2/3rds of the year.

We are also of the view that not indicating the total number of students living on campus could have serious and negative impacts when Metro Vancouver and the government decide to proceed to a governance review for the entire area. In fact, providing an accurate head count would insure that the people conducting the review would fully understand the level of resources required to adequately service this area and could even greatly strengthen the university’s bargaining stance in this respect.

We would like to conclude this part of our statement with a general, more philosophical comment: Since UBC seems intent on using Statistics Canada data as a reference point for its planning, it seems clear to us that anyone who is on campus twelve months a year should be included in all official counts of the area’s permanent residents. After all, census population numbers and other population counts use a snapshot approach to report
numbers at a given time and do not exclude people from the count if they live in apartments with short-term leases.

On another point, the AMS is also concerned that virtually all of the sections in the draft RCS that address housing affordability and choice has been omitted from the most recent draft of the plan. We are hoping this is merely an oversight and that the university will work to reintegrate it into the appropriate section of the final version of the plan (Strategy 4.1: Provide diverse and affordable housing choices), as students in Metro Vancouver and their parents are increasingly struggling with questions related to the affordability of post-secondary education. The AMS fears that not addressing this question officially and aggressively may greatly reduce the diversity of UBC’s student body, to the detriment of the university, region and province.

Sincerely,

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