



NOTE: This document has been revised slightly from its original content to reflect the information released by federal Environment Minister Peter Kent's announcement on March 7th, and the subsequent deferral of this agenda item.

March 7, 2011 Community Development Committee BurlingtonGreen Delegation

Re: Item 12, Report recommending approval to support the Randle Reef remediation project, DI-2-11

Chair Dennison, Mayor Goldring, City Councillors, staff and citizens of Burlington;

On behalf of the BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association I would like to thank you for the opportunity to delegate on the important issue of the Randle Reef remediation project.

Improving the water quality in Hamilton Harbour is an opportunity for advancing human and environmental health, economic prosperity, and cultural and recreational assets in our community. As report DI-2-11 indicates, the City of Burlington has already taken significant steps for reducing sediment and contaminant loading into the harbour through citizen education, stream conservation and improving wastewater quality. These efforts are to be commended. However, all this work and financial investment does not directly address Burlington's commitment to de-list Hamilton Harbour as an Area of Concern (AOC) if the highly toxic Randle Reef contamination problem is not remediated.

Will the entire remediation project be jeopardized if there is a budget shortfall due to a lack of local financial support? Can the project proceed without Burlington or Halton's contribution? In either case, BurlingtonGreen urges this Committee to reject the recommendation of not supporting the project and to instead negotiate an agreement that realizes a win-win solution, with Burlington as an active participant in cleaning up the Harbour, including Randle Reef.

As our organization has and continues to strongly recommend, City issues must include an equal presentation of associated social, environmental and economic considerations. Doing so will ensure the City remains accountable to its broad range of values designed to support a quality of life for all and for our future. The report before you includes strong emphasis on concerns related to financing and precedent, but it falls short in identifying the very real social and environmental implications of not taking responsibility to clean up this local toxic site.

We would like to offer 4 key points for consideration:

- (1) The City of Burlington has a long-term history of involvement as a key participant in the Hamilton Harbour RAP process as a member of the Bay Area Implementation Team. The Report suggests that engaging in the Reef remediation would set a precedent for future financial commitments and remove the responsibility of other government bodies. However, we would argue that the City has already set a precedent of support for the issue by virtue of its BAIT membership, participation in RAP processes, and past financial contributions to support water quality improvement initiatives.
- (2) The economic benefits of de-listing the Harbour, as outlined in the York University report refers to benefits in Halton and not just Hamilton. If the City of Burlington is to be entitled to the economic benefits of restoring the harbour's ecosystem services on behalf of its citizens, it has an obligation to value the water body financially and a contribution to the Reef remediation represents this valuation. The net benefits of remediating the Reef far outweigh the \$2.3 million requested, especially if the City can negotiate a LaSalle Park agreement in exchange for its contribution.
- (3) The evidence in several peer-reviewed studies indicates contaminated sediment and aquatic organisms from the Reef migrate to other parts of the Harbour and to Lake Ontario, thereby impacting human and ecosystem health on the Burlington side of the harbour. If Burlington wishes to help improve and preserve the health of its ecosystems and harbour users, it must be part of the solution and support the necessary remediation efforts.
- (4) Rejecting the request for financial support without a counter-offer or expression of interest through negotiation will not only be contrary to the City's sustainable planning values, but it will risk sending a message to the broader community that Burlington is apathetic on this issue and is unwilling to help in the area of environmental stewardship in the Harbour. Reef remediation support should also be viewed as an opportunity to reinforce strong relationships with the City of Hamilton, RAP stakeholders and Burlington's commitment to a fiscally responsible solution while protecting the health of the environment and its citizens.

We urge the City to engage in meaningful negotiations that would result in Burlington participating in the remediation on acceptable terms. Although the federal government has more recently committed to examine other ways of advancing the cleanup of AOCs, we believe Burlington needs to remain an active player in the remediation of Randle Reef. The City may not ultimately be required to contribute financially to the project, but a strong and proactive policy stance in

support of the remediation project would demonstrate good faith and a commitment to sustainability.

We believe Option 3 outlined in the report, which includes real estate benefits associated with LaSalle in exchange for the \$2.3 million contribution, is an example of a strategy worth pursuing. We are unclear of the recommendation to reject option 3 without clarification of the rationale as outlined in report DI-2-11.

Finally, report DI-2-11 includes the statement: *“There is a high potential for public opposition to the potential use of tax dollars for a project located outside of municipal boundaries thus having questionable direct benefit to the City. The project funding will be publicly measured against overall municipal capital priorities”*.

Given the City’s and this Council’s commitment to seek and support more effective citizen engagement about priority issues, we remain unclear of what public consultation on this funding proposal has taken place to date. The report contains four options for consulting with the public, but does not recommend any. We feel this is an important issue for Burlington and feel it is necessary to ascertain the community’s views on this issue prior to rejecting the financial request.

To support public awareness, on March 23rd, BurlingtonGreen will be presenting the award-winning documentary *Waterlife* to the citizens of Burlington. This film highlights the potential ecological collapse of Lake Ontario and we expect that after citizens and Council have had the opportunity to view this compelling presentation, there will be heightened support to do what is necessary to clean-up a problem that won’t go away without taking action on this shared responsibility.

Currently, negotiations between Canada and the United States are ongoing to amend the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. In this context, it is important that all players demonstrate leadership and mutual support for one another to ensure a strong policy is built to keep the Great Lakes healthy for today and the future. As a Great Lakes and Hamilton Harbour user, the City of Burlington must demonstrate strong leadership and the importance of municipalities to Great Lakes stewardship in the present and the future.

Thank you again for this opportunity to delegate on behalf of BurlingtonGreen.