



**BurlingtonGreen**

BurlingtonGreen presentation to CCS Feb 19, 2008

Chair, Mayor, Members of Committee, staff and citizens of Burlington,

I am here today to speak on behalf of BurlingtonGreen and appreciate this opportunity to comment on the report regarding the proposed Performing Arts Centre.

Our group forwarded each of you a letter on Feb 5, outlining some of our general concerns associated with this initiative and I would like to take a moment to highlight a few of them **and** offer further points based on some additional research.

As highlighted in our earlier correspondence, our issue is **not** with the PAC in relation to its merit or potential value as an added cultural attraction, instead our concerns focus on two areas: the significance of the required budget expenditure and second, the potential environmental implications of the new development.

As Burlington approaches build out, we believe this to be a critical period to ensure necessary planning and support funding is in place to ensure development takes place in a sustainable manner. We have heard members of this Council comment on how the significant funding for this project combined with other budget expenditures will leave little to no room to fund other initiatives for the city. The current state of our planet requires our leaders and citizens to recognize that addressing critical global issues requires serious commitments to support sustainability at the municipal level. The world's scientific leaders support this and urge that a change in how priorities are set and decisions are made must happen **now**....or it will be too late.

We believe it is a priority to ensure funding is in place to secure our cities natural resources and that current infrastructure and municipal facilities are upgraded and operating as energy efficiently as possible in order to help mitigate and adapt to climate change. A sustainable city operates with this balanced, visionary approach, ensuring these fundamentals are in place prior to adding more developments to the city. **We can always add new developments and attractions to the city; we have this one opportunity to get it right, when it comes to taking care of what we have now.**

BurlingtonGreen would like to see Burlington adopt the (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) ICLEI Triple Bottom Line accounting to evaluate **all** capital projects. This full accounting system has been adopted by over 550 cities, towns and countries (*wikipedia*). In practical terms, Triple Bottom Line accounting takes into account environmental and social factors in addition to financial considerations.

If we consider the three parts of TBL starting with environmental cost:

- The environmental cost of this project is significant. It will potentially have a negative impact on Burlington's commitment to corporate GHG reduction, 20 % on a per capita basis, from 1994 to 2012. As the building is currently configured, it would be a contributor of GHG's, based on conventional natural gas heating and electric cooling (approximately 200 tonnes based on the LEED Certified option). How will it affect our target of 20% reduction by 2012? We have four years left to meet this goal.

- The cost of the project as well as the ongoing subsidy costs will reduce Burlington's ability to do GHG abatement projects such as solar hot water systems for city buildings, photovoltaic systems to lower our dependence on the grid and ground source heating/cooling systems to upgrade city facilities. These are initiatives that should be applied to demonstrate a strong example of environmental stewardship.

The second part of the accounting equation is social.

- There is only so much money to go around. How will the projected estimated \$40 million capital cost and the \$300,000 to \$750,000 operating deficit per year, one of Burlington's largest capital investments, affect other priorities that support our city's social needs such as the provision of affordable housing or the protection of parklands for the use and benefit of all income levels? A facility such as a PAC is likely inaccessible to the lower income groups in Burlington, yet we expect them to contribute to the building costs and ongoing support in their taxes.

The last part is economical.

- The figures speak for themselves; the projected cost to the City (including Hydro Recovery and Special Circumstances Debt) for the PAC has increased approx. 126%, since the public was first surveyed on their opinions.

Before you proceed with this proposal, BurlingtonGreen recommends that the city embark on a widespread awareness campaign followed by a survey process that includes a thorough and balanced set of questions that recognizes both the benefits and the resulting implications of the PAC initiative. Citizens have the right to be informed with the most up to date information, before they are expected to pay for it.

Following this, if the results clearly reveal a majority support for the project and it therefore moves forward, BurlingtonGreen would recommend the following:

That Council aim for the higher LEED silver standard by:

- directing staff and the PAC team to explore further multi-use opportunities for the centre to increase its daytime use. Sustainable principles support the incorporation of multiple interest group needs into a single project to maximize operational efficiencies and minimize the requirements for additional developments elsewhere in the city.
- incorporating as a minimum a ground source heating/cooling system and other features such as solar hot water and photovoltaics to make the PAC a leader of "green" theatre design in Canada and an example for citizens to follow. These features are promoted in Future Focus Seven ( *Para 5.2.B*).

The purpose of BurlingtonGreen is to work with citizens, community groups and governments to support sustainable development and to protect our natural heritage. We therefore offer our comments on this issue in the spirit of which they are intended..... in hope that you will consider our recommendations and remember to respect the interests of generations yet to come. As John Sawhill, past president and CEO of the Nature Conservancy Society, said so well:

*"In the end our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy"*