



October 28, 2009 Delegation to Halton District School Board re: Sale of General Brock Parklands

Chair, trustees, staff,

With the focus of this evening on land sale issues and the need to meet priority capital needs, I would like to begin by suggesting we all take a moment to consider that none of us really ‘own’ the lands we live, work or learn on. Instead we should consider ourselves as stewards of the land. A generation entrusted to strive to respect the needs of many, while considering and honouring the needs of future generations.

At BurlingtonGreen, we strive to urge our city’s leaders such as yourselves that now is the time to begin adopting a very necessary approach to decision making. It is called TBL or Triple Bottom Line.

Triple bottom line is a method ratified by the United Nations and ICLEI for urban and community accounting in 2007. The process requires that in addition to the financial analysis, the social and environmental costs or benefits to a community also be considered.

An example before you today is the decision to dispose of 14 cherished acres at General Brock. Have any of you been to the site, walked the lands and experienced the natural beauty and peacefulness the area has to offer? The area’s open space, more than 200 mature trees, the woodland habitat that not only provides a magical place for children of all ages to play but also serves as habitat to local wildlife that are finding it increasingly difficult to secure a home as our city’s pockets of green continue to disappear.

As leaders in the field of education who have established a strategic plan that includes environmental stewardship, your actions need to strive to reflect this. The environmental benefits of retaining pedestrian accessible community green space are well documented. Having natural areas within communities avoids the need for more vehicles on our roads to drive father afield in order to enjoy a peaceful walk or play a game of baseball. Parklands and their tree cover are important in preserving air quality.. Trees, shrubs and turf remove smoke, dust and other pollutants from the air. One tree can remove 26 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually. It also helps in reducing energy consumption by countering the warming effects of paved surfaces.

The social costs of losing the General Brock green space to development will be the loss of playing fields and green space to the community, leading to fewer opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation. Many studies show a direct relationship between accessible green spaces and physical and psychological health and I know this and school boards across the Province are employing strategies to combat the increasing obesity rates for our youth and population. Decisions to dispose of places to play is a direct contraction to these efforts.

The sooner you and other community leaders begin adopting a TBL approach to decision making, the better chance our planet will have in securing a healthy, quality of life for generations now and into the future.

I cannot accept the mantra that I have heard from some of you that children's education is your only concern. You are citizens of this area also and you have a responsibility to arrive at a win-win solution that helps to preserve the green space for the intention it was originally established. Solutions can only be found if you collectively agree to think beyond capital and finances. Tonight is an opportunity to begin doing so.

Respectfully,

Kurt Koster & Amy Schnurr
BurlingtonGreen