



## March 7, 2011 Community Development Committee BurlingtonGreen Delegation

Re: Report CSI-4-11 recommending endorsement of State of the Environment Report IV

Chair Dennison and committee members:

BurlingtonGreen is here this evening to comment on the recently drafted State of the Environment Report. We would like to thank and congratulate the Sustainable Development Committee for all their hard work in preparing such a comprehensive, well-researched report with recommendations designed to support a healthier environment for Burlington, for now and for the future.

BurlingtonGreen supports all of the SDC report recommendations and would like to offer some additional comments for your consideration:

1. Clearly, any true environmental benefits resulting from this plan will only take place if the report and its supporting recommendations are actually executed. CSI-4-11 recommends endorsement of the document and contains responses from the city staff, but it is unclear how the report will be actually be utilized.
  - BurlingtonGreen would like to request that the recommendations be included in the next Strategic Plan and be part of any Official Plan review process.
  - Additionally, we suggest that Council consider the merits of adjusting the current SDC's terms of reference so that their report efforts and recommendations, once approved by Council, automatically be approved for inclusion into the Strategic Plan.

Doing so, we believe will streamline the process, respect the significant efforts reflected in the SDC report and ultimately, support the advancement of important environmental initiatives.

2. While there is much to comment on in the report, in the interests of time we would like to address five key recommendations some of the city staff responses.
  - The first is recommendation # 12 regarding a **Community Energy Plan**. We strongly endorse this recommendation, as a well thought out and executed Burlington energy plan will help make our power supply more secure, make Burlington more competitive for attracting new businesses and with the right objectives, provide for major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

We are encouraged by the Staff Response to this recommendation as it appears the city will be developing an energy plan with a far reaching and complete account of our energy production, conservation, infrastructure and end use impacts.

- A second critical recommendation is #17 calling for the city to work with the region of Halton to institute a well-publicized **water** conservation and efficiency strategy that includes incentives to encourage residential and industrial reductions.

While we understand that the Region of Halton is the lead agency on water, we would like to see Burlington take stronger leadership in this area. For example, the Sustainable Halton Water and Waste Water Master Plan being developed seems to be heading for a "big pipe"

option pumping Lake Ontario water all the way to Halton Hills to provide for their growth. Some American and European municipalities have reduced their water consumption by up to 20% and if this were achieved in Halton Hills and elsewhere, we may avoid spending the estimated \$50 million for big pipe construction as well as the significant environmental impacts associated with such a massive infrastructure project and conserve Halton's water resources as well.

- The third recommendation is # 3 on **land use planning**. It asks the city to work with the two school boards to ensure public green spaces are preserved where schools are closed along with the school buildings where appropriate. We would suggest this recommendation should be part of a larger, more comprehensive Green space Master Plan which BurlingtonGreen has recommended to staff and the prior Council. We have offered the City of Ottawa's template as one relevant example of a solution focused strategic plan to address green space preservation. As Burlington approaches build out, it is arguably more critical than ever before that a strategic plan be in place to avoid case by case decision making with higher risks of losing valuable community green space due to unplanned financing. A Burlington Green Space master plan would:
  - take stock of all current green space in the City (regardless of ownership – school boards, corporate etc);
  - assess community green space supply, growth and intensification plans;
  - rank or prioritize the community need for green space in addition to the environmental “value” of each parcel of land;
  - and...continue to direct annual funds to a strategic land acquisition fund strictly for green space acquisition purposes

We also recommend the City collaborate with the school boards to establish very early on which school sites are planned as future surplus so this valuable information can be incorporated into the proposed green space master plan. With a strong, effective public awareness and engagement process to support the green space master plan initiative, citizens would learn early on what the future vision for Burlington will look like when it comes to distribution of green space and this could go a long way in alleviating the challenges and controversy that accompany each new school closure and land loss that happens with the current more “piece –meal” approach. This is particularly relevant given that at HDSB's recent February 24 Long Term Accommodation Plan PIC they indicated an estimated 2500 under used high school placements in Burlington, suggesting that a high school closing south of the QEW is inevitable and more to come in future years.

- The fourth key recommendation is # 7, calling for **waste reduction** to be a central theme in educating citizens and using the audit of residential garbage as a starting point. We would go further. If we are to be serious about reducing our consumption of ‘stuff’ and dumping it into landfill, we have to do more than educate – we have to give incentives for diversion and make it easy to do if we are to have a significant impact and extend the life of our landfill. An excellent example is Green Bins, which we understand has helped increase Halton's diversion rate from 40% to 60%. We would like the City to incorporate waste reduction policies as part of their user group and facility permitting so that sport, cultural events are mandated to impose waste reduction and diversion measures. For example, a permit issued for a sport group's use of a field/facility for games or a tournament would have requirements that participants are to use refillable containers instead of disposable, paper cups or plates instead of Styrofoam and that Green carts be in place to collect the disposable paper items. These simple steps applied to the hundreds of permits issued, supported by a strong awareness campaign could go a long way in reducing Burlington's waste production.

- Finally, we agree that recommendation # 21 calling for a program to encourage and provide incentives for green standards in planning development applications has a strong potential to reduce Burlington energy consumption and green house gas emissions. Typically, heating and cooling city buildings can account for 40% of its energy use. The SOER recommendation for the city to prepare a program to encourage green standards in all planning development with incentives to achieve higher standards than required addresses this opportunity directly.

Additionally, fast tracking or reducing fees for building permits where green building standards will be executed may also be an effective way to support greater participation by the building industry where time and money is often the priority.

We are very pleased that the Staff Response indicates the city had already initiated action with a forthcoming report on an Official Plan amendment as well as a Community Improvement Project Area bylaw and Community Improvement Plan to promote and provide incentives for sustainable building features.

We again thank you for this opportunity and once again extend our gratitude to the SDC and staff involved in preparing such a comprehensive report with excellent recommendations.

Regards,

Ken Woodruff  
President  
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association