



**Save General Brock Parklands Committee**  
3505 Spruce Ave., Burlington ON, L7N 1K4 ( 905 639-2262)

February 5, 2009

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne,  
Minister of Education,  
Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street,  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1L2

Dear Ms. Wynne,

Re: Legislation Change

Neighbourhoods in communities all around the Province are losing invaluable parkland and greenspace as schools close and school lands are sold off. Provincial legislation that allows this to happen must be changed.

This loss of greenspace and sports fields is devastating to these established communities. In older areas, the schoolyards are often the only significant parkland/greenspace in the area. Their loss cuts out the heart of the community. Countless children lose playing fields, seniors lose safe areas to walk, moms can no longer take their children to the park.

We find it a contradiction that the Ministry of Education's policies support healthy lifestyles, community partnerships and environmental education and stewardship while at the same time the Ministry's current school disposition legislation prevents municipalities from maintaining valued green space and playing fields — resources that are an integral part of the health and well being of the community. This legislation is also at odds with the Ministry's stated goal of " . . . supporting schools as centres of communities: reducing the number of school closures, and improving community use of schools."

(From What We Do: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/whatwedo.html>)

The loss of this parkland will become more critical as redevelopment occurs in older areas, under the Places To Grow legislation, and populations intensify. As well, the Province is encouraging municipalities to develop more sustainably. These things cannot be accomplished without a loss of quality of life to Ontario's citizens unless The Ministry of Education's school disposition legislation is changed.

Our community of Burlington has suffered a terrible loss of parklands and greenspace from school closures. Ten school closures have resulted in the loss of over 40 acres of community land and with a projected 50,000 more people moving into the city over the next 5 years, it is more critical than ever before that the multiple levels of government work together to ensure our remaining "pockets of green" are protected.

We are now facing the most significant loss of all with irrevocable implications. The Halton District School Board, with no public consultation or review, has voted to sever and sell the estimated 20 acres of community soccer fields, baseball diamonds, parkland and irreplaceable greenspace at General Brock Park (Gary Allen), the largest school site in the history of our City. Under Legislation 444/98, Burlington citizens have no option to save these

lands but to re-purchase these once publicly owned lands at “fair market value” — an unsupportable burden of tens of millions of dollars.

We are requesting the Ministry of Education make changes to Legislation 444/98 to:

1. Eliminate the “fair market value” stipulation that limits the ability of Burlington and other communities to acquire the land and unfairly penalizes taxpayers who paid for the land originally, only to see it transferred to a regional school board at nominal cost.
2. Allow municipalities to rezone school sites to more accurately reflect their required and traditional use: school sites and adjacent parking lots zoned as institutional and the surrounding green space supported, maintained and enjoyed by the taxpayer, designated as parkland zoning.
3. Extend the current 90-day period for another school board, university, college or municipality to make an offer on a site. A longer period would allow sufficient time for educational institutions to adequately review how the site might fit future plans and allow municipalities to explore innovative options to maintain the parklands for the community.

Until recently, communities have fought these losses individually but we are now connecting with each other across the Province, sharing strategies and working together to preserve our communities’ parklands.

We have many ideas on how to protect these valuable greenspaces for the community’s use. We are requesting a meeting with you to discuss this issue. By working together we believe we can find a solution that provides school boards with viable options while preserving community parkland. Minister Wynne, we look forward to hearing from you about a convenient meeting date.

Respectfully,

Ken Woodruff  
Chair, Save General Brock Parklands Committee

Copy:  
Premier of Ontario  
Deputy Minister of Education  
All Ministers of Ontario  
Mayor Cam Jackson  
Burlington City Councillors  
Wayne Joudrie, Director of Education, Halton District School Board  
Halton District School Board Trustees  
Halton Catholic District School Board Trustees  
All Halton Region Mayors