

Good Evening Mr. Mayor, Members of Council, city staff and citizens of Burlington.

I thank you for this opportunity to share with you this evening.

Members of the Save General Brock Parkland Committee, sports groups and concerned citizens have presented to council for approx 4 years about the need for parkland preservation as a budget priority.

We understand that the motion for the implementation of a strategic land acquisition fund is to be voted on this evening and we wanted to take this opportunity to:

- highlight a few key points.
- inform you of some new information
  - and respond to a few of your comments raised at the recent budget & strategic planning session.

Some of the key points are as follows:

- While it has been the at risk GB property that brought our group together and remains our priority, our participation in this process has provided us with insight into the larger issue of school parkland losses and their implications for the city as a whole.
- We have discovered that although the city has been able to secure some parklands with school closures, they have been on a very small scale.
- To date park dedication funds have not been used to support school parkland acquisitions and therefore we need a strategy and funds to ensure we are able to save larger at risk parklands in this city. Small parkettes simply do not cut it. We need and deserve larger open spaces with sports fields and trees...for the people, for the environment and for the future.
- While this city should feel proud of its accomplishments, our research has indicated that it needs to improve in the areas of

environmental impact and parkland protection if we want to build a sustainable city for future generations.

There is substantial evidence to support why we must protect Burlington's last green spaces.

1. Parklands are an integral part of this city. For many, they are considered the heart of the community. They are also what gives Burlington its unique character.

2. City-owned parklands are not different from school property parklands in the eyes of the public. They simply use and depend on them and the thought of them disappearing to development is devastating. (new) – Since our recent presentations to Committee, our group attended the HDSB strategic planning meeting to provide input and ensure that future directions include working more effectively with partners such as the city to include the preservation of parklands in their mandate. We hope this will help support a multitude of benefits to the people of Burlington.

3. Parkland playfields are essential to support a healthy lifestyle for the general public and the sports user groups that rely on them. With obesity on the rise and a projected population increase, nearby places to play will be in demand more than ever before.

4. If you support the environment, you must support parkland preservation. The two are critically linked. (new)-In fact, even this city's Sustainable Development Committee, in its soon to be released State of the Environment report, identifies the need to look at supply of parklands in the region south of New Street, affirming the relevance of parkland connections to the environment.

5. And finally, accountability to the people. Residents throughout Burlington have spoken up to let you know that the preservation of places like GB are very important to them. We

applaud your ongoing efforts to provide opportunities for the public to provide input. We hope you will recognize the feedback and take appropriate action with your vote of support tonight.

WE know finding a solution to accomplish this goal of preservation is a very real challenge. However, we believe it can be done. This belief is inspired by the many other examples of vision and innovation that already exist in this city.

With this in mind, I would like to take a moment to respond to some of your concerns or comments:

- **Councilor Craven**, we thank you for listening to the presentations by our Committee over the years and we respect your concerns regarding the challenge to find the dollars. You said “we are not magicians”. And yet, we know magic is not necessary. One simply needs to look at initiatives such as:  
-Performing Arts Centre,  
--the proposed MacMaster development  
to see that funds can be found. We know you have offered support to our efforts in the past and we hope we can count on you today.
- **Councilor Taylor**, our Committee also welcomed your open-minded approach reflected in your statement last year “you have to scheme to dream” in referencing that the GB issue would require a unique approach. Your suggestion of a tax levy gave us the boost we needed as it showed us that you were willing to offer your expertise.
- **Councilor D’Amelio**, at a recent committee mtg, you quoted figures the city has spent on parks and their development and repair etc. This is very important, but they do not address the concerns of those who are frustrated due to the current shortage of outdoor playfields. If a child approached you and asked why he or she does not have facilities to play on, we are confident that your response would not be “enough money has already been spent”. We expect your reply would be more along the lines of, “we will find a way to make it better”.

- As newest members to this council, **Councilor Thoem** and **Goldring**, you appear to bring with you a refreshing focus on the environment. With this issue being the number one priority of Canadians, your knowledge, dedication and commitment in this area is certainly timely and welcomed. We believe you recognize that support for parklands is required if Burlington is going to better its environmental standing and truly be a sustainable city.
- **Councilor Dennison**, we thank you for your long standing and continued efforts with this issue and believe you have clearly demonstrated that you not only care about the priorities of your constituents but, you have looked beyond to recognize that a strategic fund for green spaces would be beneficial to all areas of the city and to all residents.
- **Mayor Jackson**, your motion to ensure a respectable number of funds are in place reflects a true commitment to the issue of parkland preservation it shows us that you are true to your word. You want to build an even better city and you recognize that in doing so we need think long about development and recognize what really makes Burlington special ...before it is too late.

Thus, given the wealth of information presented today and at previous council meetings on Burlington's shortage of greenspace and the universal benefits of parks to everyone, we are respectfully counting on your vote for a Strategic Land Purchase fund tonight.

Your vote of support will send a clear message to your constituents that you value the green spaces in their communities. A preventative, strategic approach will speak volumes to the people of Burlington.

Please vote with vision, think of future generations to come, think of the environment and choose to protect Burlington's parklands.

---

