

Nov 18 submission to the Burlington Post (not published)

Dear Editor,

With the recent publicity questioning whether McMaster will find a home in Burlington or not, I thought your readers may be interested in the reply we received from them regarding one of the site options they explored. (letter and response further below).

Their response indicates that the General Brock location will not suit their needs but we are hopeful that other interested educational institutions (such as the Halton Catholic School Board) will come to the table to explore options. As General Brock is the largest school property to become at risk in this City, we expect that different levels of government and the School Board will work to find a solution that avoids yet another housing development, secures well used parklands and playfields and keeps public lands in public hands.

Thank you, The Save General Brock Parklands Committee

SAVE GENERAL BROCK PARKLAND COMMITTEE

November 4, 2007

*Dr Peter George
President
McMaster University
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4L8*

Dear Dr. George:

The Save General Brock Parkland Committee of Burlington recently became aware of McMaster University's decision to withdraw from the proposed campus in Burlington's downtown. Our understanding is that the primary reason for the change is the fact that the core location would not support sufficient space for future building expansion.

As you may recall, in the spring of 2005, representatives from McMaster (Linda Axford, Bob McNutt and Lorna Higdon-Norrie), met with our group expressing interest in the General Brock location as an option for a future home. Minutes from the City of Burlington Report on this meeting of May 18, 2005 said that "The team working on the City and McMaster University partnership to establish a university presence in Burlington is extremely excited about the opportunities the General Brock High School site may provide for this post-secondary initiative." Our group particularly appreciated hearing how McMaster devotes a significant amount of time and energy in establishing, maintaining, and enhancing community relations.

With this in mind, we thought it timely to write to you to inquire about McMaster's current interest in the General Brock site. It is our understanding that the property owners (Halton District School Board) have interim plans to make use of part of the site but Director W. Joudrie has indicated that any interested parties should make this interest known as they explore their future needs and planning options.

Furthermore, we are currently awaiting confirmation from the school board about next steps with the site disposition process in regards to Section 13 of the Education Act. The HDSB first declared the property surplus in 2003. The Act states that if a School Board has not "disposed" of the property within three years of the expiration of the 90 day period, the process must begin again and the property must be made available to an interested educational institution of Ontario before it goes to the open market.

If this is confirmed to be the case (and we have reason to believe it will be), clearly there is a very real opportunity of consideration for McMaster here.

The 26 acre (10.5 h) property at General Brock includes large areas of open space, sports fields, an abundance of mature trees, a 126,000 sq ft building and a central location in one of the most beautiful areas of the city. Its proximity to the waterfront, downtown, QEW and local amenities are all pluses and yet the peacefulness of this parkland area gives it a character that is becoming increasingly hard to find in any city.

The Save General Brock Parkland group is a recognized City of Burlington Advisory Committee. We have been working together for over four years now to search for an innovative solution for the use of the General Brock site that would best serve the interests of the environment and the people of Burlington for years to come.

Citizens have supported and enjoyed the General Brock parklands for over 40 years and we believe they would like to see them maintained as educational lands and green space. Our Committee would welcome the opportunity to meet again with McMaster to revisit this opportunity and explore what could be a mutually beneficial "fit".

Best Regards,

The Save General Brock Parkland Committee

Response:

Sent: Monday, November 12, 2007 4:45 PM
Subject: General Brock Parkland

Dear Ms. Brown,

I am writing in response to your email below to Peter George, President of McMaster University. As Provost of McMaster, I have assumed responsibility for our Burlington campus and our DeGroote School of Business expansion plans.

Thank you for your suggestion that we consider locating in the General Brock site. We share your view that this is a lovely area with many draws. Further, we very much appreciate that you understand that we are working hard to serve the Burlington community rather than thinking only of ourselves.

After discussing the General Brock Parkland site internally, we have unfortunately concluded that it is not the right location for our new campus. We do not believe that it is a location where a potentially high density of activity would be appropriate or well received.

Thank you again for bringing this opportunity to our attention.
Ilene Busch-Vishniac