

Dear City of Burlington,

As a Burlington taxpayer and an active member of the Burlington community I am deeply disappointed that the Burlington Aquatic Devilray's has lost pool time at Burlington municipal pools. As you can hopefully understand, pool time is required for a swim club to remain viable. The action of taking away pool time from a Burlington swim club and transferring that time to a club with the majority of members from other communities is ludicrous in my opinion no matter what process was used to justify this decision.

As you are hopefully beginning to understand, the Burlington Aquatic Devilray's is more than a club; it is an extended Burlington family with over 40 years of coaching and swimming excellence for Burlington youth. My two older children, [REDACTED] swim with the Burlington Aquatic Devilray's and it has been a very positive experience for both of them with excellent coaching and a club with amazing team spirit. My son [REDACTED] has qualified for the Ontario Swimming Championships this year as have many other BAD team members.

The Burlington Aquatic Devilray's is a pillar of excellence in our community. Why is the city bureaucracy trying to destroy this? Please do what you can to restore the pool time to the Burlington Aquatic Devilray's!

Sincerely,

Art Hilson

To Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and Members of
Burlington City Council,

My name is Kendra Baskin, and I'm writing as a concerned parent of a swimmer with the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays. I recently learned that our team is at risk of losing pool time in the city—a consequence of what appears to be a procurement technicality.

Frankly, the idea that hundreds of young athletes could lose access to their swim team and training space over a bureaucratic oversight is not only disappointing—it's ludicrous. At some point, City Council needs to shift the focus from technicalities and process to best practice, and ask: what is truly in the best interest of Burlington's youth, families, and community?

The Burlington Aquatic Devilrays is a not-for-profit organization that gives back consistently, through food and clothing drives and by fostering a culture of inclusion, resilience, and teamwork among its athletes. The club is a second home for these kids. For my daughter, and many others, the team has been a source of friendship, mentorship, confidence, and physical wellness. The coaches encourage excellence, but even more importantly, they build character.

Losing pool access wouldn't just cancel practices—it would dismantle something incredibly positive that this city should be proud to support. These swimmers aren't just athletes; they are Burlington kids who are learning discipline, building community, and giving back.

I strongly urge the City to reconsider any action that would limit or remove pool access from the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays. Let's find a solution that prioritizes our local children and recognizes the value this team brings to the community.

Sincerely,

Kendra Baskin

Proud Burlington resident and parent of a
Burlington Aquatic Devilrays swimmer

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Good morning,

I am writing this letter as a Burlington resident and taxpayer. I am a mother of 3 children, ages 12, 10 and 8. My son plays hockey with the Burlington Bulldogs, and my youngest daughter plays with the Burlington Barracudas. My 10yo daughter swims competitively with the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD), and has been with this club since the age of 7. I am also a steward of the city of Burlington. I am a family doctor here, and my practice of just under 1000 patients include many Burlington residents. My office visits inevitably start with patients asking how my children are doing. A few swim with BAD, but others have watched the news, read the Burlington gazette, seen the online petition, and are asking me - how did BAD get to a place where after 40 years in this city, they no longer have pool time?

As a physician, part of my job in making a diagnosis is to look at the facts and ask questions.

FACT #1: As per the city's press release dated June 30, 2025 - "the City has allocated pool time for competitive swim programs through a formal procurement process....this helps ensure we get the best value for residents and that all QUALIFIED swim clubs have an EQUAL opportunity to apply"

FACT #2: As part of the RFP process, BAD was asked to submit a document (a certificate of incorporation as a non-profit or not-for-profit organization) that DOES NOT EXIST. Service Ontario has confirmed that there is no such document. A similar document, one that is legally recognized in Ontario, was submitted showing the same proof of non profit incorporation, and BAD's bid was disqualified as it failed to submit the city's required document - a document that DOES NOT EXIST. A formal request for review was submitted by BAD, and the city's decision remained unchanged.

QUESTION: If flaws to the procurement process were unveiled (requesting non existent documents), would it not be in the city's best interest to fix them before continuing with the process, to ensure that EQUAL opportunity is given to all swim clubs?

FACT #3: as per the city's press release dated June 30, 2025 - "the RFP required all applicants to demonstrate that atleast 85% of their registrants live in Burlington." According to Swim Ontario, GHAC's CURRENT membership only includes a Burlington residency rate of 28%. This includes the development ("learn to swim" or "fundamentals") and competitive programs. This is FAR BELOW the required 85% that the city is requiring.

QUESTION: If GHAC did not meet all the requirements of the RFP process, why wasn't their bid disqualified?

Fact #4: The city updated their press release dated June 30, 2025, stating "bidders were required to demonstrate how their organizations will ensure 85% of participants are Burlington residents....GHAC demonstrated that it could fulfill this requirement upon service commencement in September 2025...and annually thereafter".

QUESTION: Why is the city giving GHAC the opportunity to meet a certain requirement AFTER the closing of the RFP process, when the same opportunity was not given to BAD? And what happens if the residency requirement is not met annually?

Mayor Meed Ward, members of council - you are stewards of the city of Burlington. Many of your constituents have reached out to you regarding this ongoing issue, and the same automated replies sent back to them in response are very disheartening. Burlington is set to lose a swim club that has been rooted here for the last 40 years. BAD is a non profit organization run by VOLUNTEER PARENTS. We don't have paid staff to run the club, let alone lead the fight that we are currently in. I want to thank Kimberly Calderbank and the rest of the leadership team for taking the helm in an effort to ensure that a fair and transparent RFP process has taken place. I only ask that you look at all the facts with an OPEN and UNBIASED mind, and ask yourself this question - is the city's RFP process actually giving all QUALIFIED swim clubs an EQUAL opportunity to apply?

Respectfully,

Dr. Deborah Lee
Burlington resident & taxpayer

Subject: Written Delegation in Support of the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays – RFP 25-202

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Burlington City Council,

My name is Darlene Smith, and I have had the privilege of serving as a parent volunteer with the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD) for the past nine years. Both of my children have trained under Coach Sergei Soloukhin, and for our family, BAD has become more than just a swim club — it is a second home. I have witnessed firsthand the extraordinary positive impact this organization has on young people, families, and our community as a whole.

The Burlington Aquatic Devilrays is more than just a competitive swim team — it is a vital part of the fabric of Burlington. For over 40 years, BAD has provided a structured, inclusive, and supportive environment where young athletes develop not only exceptional swimming ability, but also confidence, discipline, and resilience.

Central to that success is Coach Sergei Soloukhin, who has led the club with distinction for more than two decades. His mentorship has helped shape generations of swimmers into high-achieving, community-minded adults. His influence reaches far beyond the pool deck, and I am continually inspired by the respect and gratitude his athletes — including my own children — carry with them.

BAD operates under a community-based, not-for-profit model that prioritizes inclusion, accessibility, and youth development. Our intentionally low club fees allow the club to reach a broad and diverse population, regardless of financial circumstances. We believe that every child in Burlington should have the opportunity to participate in sport, build lifelong skills, and grow with the support of caring coaches and mentors.

Beyond athlete development, BAD has contributed directly to public sport infrastructure. The club has supported the installation of diving blocks at Centennial Pool and Nelson Pool, and a scoreboard used in competitions — improvements that benefit all users of these municipal facilities.

Our programming also brings visibility and economic benefit to Burlington. BAD-hosted meets attract teams from across Canada and internationally — including from St. John's, Newfoundland and even Mexico. These events showcase our city as a vibrant destination for youth sport, boost tourism, and build community pride and connection.

Unfortunately, I am deeply concerned that the recent decision to disqualify BAD's bid under RFP 25-202 places this legacy at risk. I respectfully request that the City of Burlington reconsider this decision and initiate a new Request for Proposals — one that allows for a fair, transparent, and thorough review of all submissions.

A renewed RFP process would also provide the opportunity to ensure that language and criteria are clearly and consistently applied, particularly across similar RFPs. For a volunteer-led, community-driven organization like BAD, clarity and fairness are essential to our ability to continue operating and serving the public.

BAD is not just a swim club. It is a trusted partner in youth development, a support system for families, and a contributor to public infrastructure and local economic vitality. With renewed support and a fair opportunity, I am confident BAD will continue to invest in Burlington's future — one swimmer, one family, and one season at a time.

Please accept this letter as my **written delegation** in support of the **verbal delegation by the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays**, which is taking place at City Hall on **Monday, July 7th**. I hope that Council will consider the value and legacy of this organization and support a path forward that allows it to continue serving our city.

Thank you for your continued service to our community. I respectfully ask for your support in ensuring that this valued institution has the opportunity to continue its meaningful work for generations to come.

Warm regards,

Darlene Smith



To the Mayor, Members of the City Council,

I am writing to express my deep concern and unwavering support for our local swim club, BAD (Burlington Aquatic Devilrays), which is currently facing an incredibly difficult and unfair situation.

BAD has always been more than just a swim club—it is a second home for hundreds of youth in our city. It fosters discipline, physical and mental well-being, lifelong friendships, and a sense of belonging. It is a place where young people grow not only as athletes, but as individuals. The possibility that our community's swim club could lose access to its local pools—its home base—to an out-of-town organization feels deeply wrong. This isn't just about pool time; it's about losing a cornerstone of our local community.

My family has proudly been part of BAD since 2016. Today, we have two dedicated swimmers who have found their passion in the water, their mentors in the coaches, and their closest friendships through this club. As a family, we invest countless hours each week—not only attending practices and competitions, but also volunteering to support the club, the events, and the broader community of families and children who benefit from it.

BAD has been one of the most positive and enriching environments our children have ever known. The idea that it could all be lost due to a clerical or administrative error is devastating. This club is not just a youth sports program—it is our kids' lives. It gives them purpose, structure, and joy. And it gives parents like us a community and a sense of shared investment in something truly meaningful.

I urge you to please do everything in your power to protect and prioritize our local club, our children, and their future in this sport. Burlington deserves to keep its community-rooted swim club—one that has served its families with dedication, integrity, and heart for decades.

Sincerely,
Geraldine Guenot
Parent and Proud BAD Swim Family Member Since 2016

Dear Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and Burlington City Counsellors

My daughter is twelve years old and has been swimming for the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays for the past three years. She has always been a kid who enjoyed the water, and it was initially this love of swimming that led us to sign her up with BAD. Over the past three years she has developed meaningful friendships and maintained important relationships with the coaches who are dedicated to working with the swimmers in this club. Being a part of this swim community has been good for her overall social, emotional, and physical well-being. More importantly however, has been the impact this club and this sport have had on her level of self-confidence, determination, and drive to succeed.

Over the past three years, I have watched my daughter go from a kid who loved the water to an athlete who is dedicated, passionate and focused on achieving her goals. She has never been an early riser, like me; she has always enjoyed staying up late and sleeping in. In September, when she was moved to a squad with four 5:30 am practices a week, I was concerned that this would deter her from swimming and worried that it might even lead her to consider quitting the team. It took her a few months to adjust to this new schedule, but to my surprise, she has embraced the early morning practices and prefers to be the first to arrive, allowing herself time to quietly sit by the pool and ground herself before the start of a two-hour training session.

She has recently been very successful in swimming the 50m Butterfly, a particularly difficult stroke. As her time continues to improve, she has started asking questions about cross-training, exercises she can do to make her "butterfly" muscles stronger. She has been equally concerned about what she has been putting into her body, wanting to know what foods are healthy options and how she can fuel her body appropriately to ensure that she is able to build muscle and maintain proper health and wellness. These questions and this thirst for knowledge are driven by a desire to excel and be a better swimmer, but it is also building healthy habits that will serve my daughter for the rest of her life.

My daughter has had two different coaches while at the club and has made healthy connections with both. She particularly liked Coach D because he made swimming fun, kept her engaged, and helped her transition seamlessly from the "fun development" stage to preparing her to be a competitive athlete. Her current coach, A, provides the perfect mix of seriousness and encouragement. A is a fierce swimmer, qualifying for the world swimming competition in Singapore, beyond her swimming she is a triathlete, a mother to two young children and an excellent coach. She embodies the qualities that I want my daughter to strive for and is an amazing role model for all swimmers, but particularly the female ones.

We have a younger child at home who has significant special needs. Our home can be stressful and chaotic at times due to circumstances beyond our control. BAD has provided a safe space for my daughter to grow, learn, develop self-confidence and form meaningful, lasting relationships that matter. If BAD is not provided with the pool time they require for the next season, not only will my child be devastated, but it will have an immediate impact on our entire family unit. The other swimming club in Burlington does not provide the competitive edge that my daughter is looking for, and this will force us to look for space at a club in another city. Meaning more travel time for practices, more time away from home, less time for homework and other activities and less time we can spend as a family unit. It will force my daughter to start all over again, having to develop new relationships with other swimmers and coaches and

learn the culture of a new club in a new city. With her current training time at ten hours weekly and the likelihood of it extending as she progresses, driving back and forth to another city is something that will cause my family unnecessary hardship. Meeting the demands of her busy training schedule has already stretched our resources thin, balancing full-time employment, a competitive sport, and the challenges that parenting a child with special needs requires. This situation has caused my entire family unit a level of stress that was not necessary. We live in Burlington. We pay taxes in Burlington. My child should get to swim in Burlington. I am not against the existence of another club in our beautiful city but feel strongly that we should have a choice as to whether we join that club. If my daughter is no longer able to swim for BAD, she will be losing much more than just a swim club and the impact will be detrimental to her emotional and physical wellbeing.

Sincerely,

Helen Ziegler

Burlington Resident (Ward 1)

July 3, 2025

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Councillor Galbraith,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written delegation in support of the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD).

I want to tell you about a moment I observed while I was volunteering at a swim meet at Nelson pool in late June. In the lane next to me, a young BAD swimmer was nervously awaiting the beginning of her race. She was about to race a 200-metre individual medley, a tough event that tests all four swim strokes, and she worried about how she would perform. Luckily, in her lane an older BAD swimmer was volunteering as a race timekeeper, and she encouraged the young athlete to dive in and try her very best.

At the time, I didn't think much of it. Because it's exactly the kind of thing I see all the time at BAD. BAD is about more than training swimmers to shave seconds off of a race time. Through BAD, my daughter has made friends across the city, given back by volunteering at swim meets and donating to local food banks, and been inspired by her coaches to achieve her very best. BAD coaches are exemplary individuals and athletes; several have competed at the national and Olympic levels, and they've encouraged my daughter to push herself in new races, and even to try her hand at competing in a triathlon.

Without BAD, that would all disappear. The ability to compete for and represent a Burlington-based team is incredibly important for our family. Practically, if we needed to travel to another city to train, it would be impossible to continue the sport. But, on a personal note, we love the community we've built here in Burlington, and we're proud to have Burlington on the back of our T-shirts at swim meets across Ontario.

Thank you again for taking the time to listen to so many of our voices over the last week. I understand that city leadership continues to work with BAD to resolve this issue, and I'm grateful that we have received this support.

Sincerely,

Jill Scarrow

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Council,

First and foremost, thank you for your continued dedication to our community and for giving us the opportunity to be heard. Your leadership and service to Burlington are deeply appreciated especially in times when community voices need support and understanding.

We are writing to respectfully request your assistance in addressing a situation that has left the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays Swim Club, an organization that has served this city for over 40 years, without access to municipal pool facilities for the upcoming season.

To be clear, we understand that this situation is not the result of a decision made by you, the Mayor, or by Council. We are not here to assign blame. We are here because 400 athletes, over 85% of them Burlington kids, are currently without a home in the water. We are here to seek your help in ensuring this oversight can be resolved swiftly, fairly, and in the best interest of Burlington families.

Recently, our club's Request for Proposal (RFP) submission was rejected due to an administrative issue related to incorporation documentation. The City requested a "current and valid certificate of incorporation," a document that does not exist in its requested form for long-standing non-profits like ours. We provided an official Certificate of Status to confirm our good standing as a registered non-profit, yet it appears this was not accepted.

As a result, our access to Burlington pools is now at risk, and so too are the dreams and development of hundreds of young athletes. The timing of this process has made it especially difficult for swimmers to find placements in other clubs, many of which have already finalized rosters. For some of the senior swimmers, this could seriously impact their ability to train at a competitive level, pursue scholarships, or continue a sport that means so much to them.

But the impact goes far beyond competition. For so many kids, this team is their second family. It gives them purpose, structure, and joy. In our own family, our 10-year-old has found a sense of belonging, confidence, and discipline through this team that we could never have imagined. Swimming has become more than just a sport, it has been a lifeline. The coaches and teammates are role models. Practices are where they feel their best. The friendships, the goals, the pride of representing Burlington, it's all incredibly meaningful. The idea that this might be taken away because of a technical misunderstanding is heartbreaking.

Beyond athletic achievement, this club is part of the fabric of Burlington. The club rents over \$20,000 in pool time monthly and is funded entirely by families. BAD brings in hundreds of spectators and supporters during competitions and meets. The economic and community impact of our presence is real and measurable. Most importantly, our swimmers, coaches, and volunteers live here, work here, go to school here, and give back here.

We recognize the importance of a fair and open RFP process. We fully support the City's commitment to transparency, equity, and best practices. We simply believe that a miscommunication or documentation misunderstanding should not jeopardize the future of a program that has delivered four decades of excellence and community engagement.

We respectfully ask that Council consider advocating for a resolution that preserves our access to Burlington facilities. Whether that's by revisiting our RFP application, providing interim accommodations, or exploring alternative solutions, we are committed to working in partnership with the City to move forward constructively.

Thank you again for your time, attention, and service. We are hopeful that with your help we can ensure the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays continue to proudly represent this city in and out of the pool.

With gratitude and respect,

--

Rev. Jim Gill
Coordinating Minister

Dear Members of Council,

Thank you for taking the time to read this. My name is Krista, and I'm a Burlington resident and parent. My [REDACTED] son swims with the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays, and I wanted to share what this situation has meant to our family—and why I'm asking for your support.

I understand this decision was made by City staff, not Council. But your support still matters. You are the voice of this community, and right now, hundreds of families need you to speak up.

For my son, BAD isn't just a swim team. It's where he's learned to push himself, to show up even when it's hard, and to be part of something bigger. He trains through pain. He cheers for other swimmers. He's found a second home with this team. This club has helped him grow into a confident, disciplined, and kind kid—and it's given our family a sense of connection and stability.

"I've been part of BAD for almost half my life. If you take this away, I wouldn't just be losing swimming—I'd be losing my friends and coaches. This club works for my family because it's in our neighbourhood, near my school. There's nowhere else I can get to after school, and without that, I can't keep swimming."

— [REDACTED] 11-year-old BAD Swim Club member

We've been told this was about a missed form. But from what I understand, another club also missed a requirement and wasn't penalized in the same way. That inconsistency is hard to accept, especially when the consequences are this serious.

BAD has been part of Burlington for 40 years. It's a well-run, high-performing club that helps keep sport accessible for families. These kids are future lifeguards and swim instructors. They are committed, community-minded, and they deserve the chance to keep going.

"My coaches have taught me not to give up and that nothing's impossible. I don't want to see them have to leave and join other clubs. And I don't want to start over somewhere else, working hard just to prove my swimming to new people who don't know me. This is my team."

— [REDACTED], 11-year-old BAD Swim Club member

I know you didn't make this decision—but I hope you'll support this delegation, ask the tough questions, and help find a fair and timely path forward. One that reflects Burlington's values and doesn't leave hundreds of kids behind.

Thank you for listening—and for standing with this community when it counts.

Sincerely,
Krista Barnett

Dear Mayor Meed Ward, Counsellor Bentivegna and Council Members,

RE: July 7th, 2025 Council Meeting. Agenda Item 9.3 Aquatics Procurement
Burlington Aquatic Devilrays Delegation

My husband and I and our three children are residents of North Burlington (ward 6) and our two eldest daughters (age 9 and age 8) are proud Burlington Aquatic Devilray swimmers. Joined BAD in September 2024 after a successful tryout and this club has been an important pillar of our lives for the last year. We've seen such growth, not only in swimming ability, but in sense of belonging and team pride, grit and determination, sense of responsibility and new friendships. We are looking forward to many more years with BAD and it is our hope that our youngest daughter (age 4) will one day join the club too.

Thank you so much for the opportunity for our club to address council this morning regarding our urgent concerns about the recent Aquatics Procurement process resulting in disqualification of BAD's bid for the 2025-2026 swim season. This decision was a devastating blow to our club, which has been a strong Burlington community organization for the last 40 years. We respectfully ask that the process leading to this exclusion from pool time be reviewed for fairness and transparency, particularly, the reason for the bid's disqualification (ie request for a current and valid certificate of incorporation, which is not a document available from Service Ontario) and the requirement that the successful bid go to an organization with > 85% members who are residents of Burlington (BAD has 89% Burlington residents).

Regardless of the outcome of the Aquatics Procurement or the result of the council's investigation into the process, our main focus remains on securing pool time in Burlington to allow our swimmers to continue to train, thrive and represent the city we love! Thank you for hearing our voices.

Sincerely,

Lisa C.A. D'Alessandro
Resident of Burlington
Parents of BAD swimmers

July 3, 2025

To whom it may concern,

My name is [REDACTED] and I have been a part of the BAD community and family for 4 years. I do say 'family' because I truly believe we are more of a family than a team.

BAD is a place where you spend up to every day with your teammates. I swim 4 times a week before school and it is the highlight of my day. I originally started swimming because I loved the sport, but I think I speak for a lot of us when I say that I couldn't have imagined the friends I would have made in these pools. These friendships will last a lifetime and these pools are like a home to us. The experiences I have had, would never have happened without BAD, the coaches, friends, parents & pools.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
BAD swimmer, Age 13

Dear Mayor ward

I am so umbelively mad at the situation that is happening with GHAC and BAD I don't get why they get our pools. WE LIVE in Burlington. Yea maybe 28% people that go to GHAC live in Burlington. But there are hundreds of people that live in Burlington, that swim for BAD. IT'S NOT FAIR that US swimmers have to go to different swim clubs just to do the thing we love. IT'S NOT FAIR us swimmers don't get to swim were we live.

Swimming for BAD is really important to me because I have GOOD friends, GOOD coaches, I have so many good memories at BAD. I don't want to have to swim some were else I LOVE BAD it's like my second family. Everything at BAD was fun sometimes a bit hard but life is hard too. We do things as a group. Help each other out. All are team breakfasts after practise. When I wasn't in the best mood after friends made me smile. When I was disa pointed in my self at a swim meet my coach said "There's still tomorrow, it's just one bad day. YOU can do better tomorrow." And she was right. I did do well. I LOVE my swim team, I LOVE BAD. I want to make more good memories, I want us to have more team breakfasts, I want my friends NOT new people, I want my coach, I WANT MY SWIM CLUB BAD. This is why BAD is important to me.

Burlington resident 12 years old

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Burlington City Councillors,

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this message. I am submitting this to you and respectfully request that it be included in Support of the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays at the Committee of the Whole, on July 7th, 2025.

My name is [REDACTED], and I am going into grade 10 at M.M. Robinson High School here in Burlington. Additionally, I am a competitive swimmer and have been competing with the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays swim team (BAD) for over six years. During this time, I have learned various lessons that will help me with my future, made lifelong connections, and interacted with a strong community.

Competitive swimming means the world to me. I've been participating in the sport for as long as I can remember and while there have been ups and downs, I ultimately do not know where I would be without it. About four years ago, I met the best friends I've ever had. People have joined and left the sport but those who remained by my side are some who I would trust with my life. I believe that being put through grueling tasks practically every day helps one grow close to their peers and I can attest to that. Adding on to that, the coaches are like second parents, helping us swimmers achieve our goals while also comforting us when things don't go the way we want.

Swimming is not an easy sport. While many sports have one or two practices a week, this sport is full time commitment, typically providing a minimum of ten practices a week. Waking up at 5 a.m. even when I didn't want to, pushing through a difficult workout, and working hard for the results that I want, have taught me a meaningful lesson about discipline. Good things don't come easy, and I've learned that the tough way.

Some may argue swimming is *just* a sport. It can be done anywhere, from any team, under any coach, and the specifics don't matter. I disagree. I don't believe that I could prosper the way I have under my current coaches and in my current environment if it were to simply switch teams. With the current situation regarding the lack of pool time being provided to our team, our team has suffered. Many swimmers feel like they have no choice and must move to another club to continue training as they have been this year. To me, that is not an option. I intend to stand with BAD and the community that we have built here. This isn't just a team; it's a second family.

BAD has been deeply connected to and identified with the City of Burlington for a long time. We organize fundraisers, clothing and food drives, and a variety of other events that foster community involvement. Ultimately, in my heart, no other team can ever replace BAD.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Thank you Deputy Mayor Nisan.

I will submit a written note to the City for the upcoming meeting on July 7th and, in fact, I registered as a delegate but I believe the Burlington Aquatic Devilray's (BAD) will opt to restrict the club's comments to three speakers. Nevertheless, I wanted to respond to your email and have copied those who I assume will be party to the decisions regarding the way forward, including the Mayor's office. I previously wrote to her office and received a response today.

I have several points I want to make for your consideration. As background, let me repeat I am 73 years old, raised two children and have six grandchildren with three in BAD. I have witnessed my oldest granddaughter in BAD during practices, meets and championships for over 8 years. I am quite a swimming enthusiast and while far from an expert, I have a great sense of what makes BAD and its swimmers unique. I understand kids and how "stability" impacts their sense of well-being, particularly as they approach their teen years and grow to young adults. Of course, there are emotions and feelings of distrust in this scenario. However, I have been in the business world for over 50 years and remain an active director of a couple of significant organizations. I am pragmatic and like to make my arguments based on fact and a high degree of respect for all parties. I also pride myself as being someone who understands that common sense must prevail. One of the organizations I represent has a code of conduct that includes the statement: "no rules, policies or guidelines will ever replace good judgement and common sense." After all, if that wasn't the case, we wouldn't need people to make decisions. Whether decisions are being made in courts, businesses, or in one's personal life, common sense and an understanding as to what a reasonable person would do in a particular set of circumstances is the underlying discipline. I trust this is an approach that city representatives embrace as well.

Here are some additional arguments in support of my view that this has been an unfair and unwarranted decision that must be revisited.

1) If there was a technical issue with documents that were created 40 years ago and have somehow been misplaced, with a simple investigation I found that BAD is a not-for-profit organization in good standing and aligned with respectful institutions like Swim Ontario and Swim Canada. You would think that an organization that operated within Burlington for 40 years, and is recognized as a strong member of the Canadian swim community, would have been given the benefit of the doubt and this technical matter brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Instead, a club that does not meet the City's minimum requirements was given flexibility to prove 85% or more Burlington swimmers by September. This seems very much like a double standard.

2) Keeping the kids in mind, please understand they have: enormous pride in Burlington and BAD; love and respect their coaches; enjoy a real feeling of "family"; have grown up with each other; and, generally consider the experience precious. The intensity of their relationships with one another increases as they progress through the program. They don't want to break from this kind of comfort and familiarity. Why should they? The BAD team has enjoyed a lot of competitive success and goodwill.

3) While GHAC will probably argue otherwise, from my observations and discussions with many members of competing clubs, GHAC has not achieved the respect and success that BAD enjoys. The quality of the organization and its coaches may be acceptable but that presents no advantage for BAD swimmers. Again, BAD can outline the backgrounds of their coaches, but suffice to say we have people that have reached National and Olympic levels and many have years of coaching experience. I might add that I have nothing against the kids who swim for GHAC - I wish them well. Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Milton and most cities have their own competitive clubs. I assume GHAC came about as there are several smaller communities in the Golden Horseshoe who cannot support their own club and/or may not have the necessary pools. Of course, more pool time is what GHAC wants. Unfortunately, their parents chose to live in Golden Horseshoe communities that may offer certain benefits but also less amenities. In our case, we chose Burlington which has some disadvantages including higher taxes but, in turn, amenities such as pools.

4) How can any club work hard to develop competitive swimmers and fine young adults who are active in their community only to "have the rug swept out from under them" when the next contract falls due. That is what is happening here. No organization can proceed to the best of their ability and build the kind of reputation and success that BAD enjoys in the face of that kind of uncertainty. It takes time to build a successful swim club with years of dedication and hard work (from 6 or 7 years of age to young adults).

5) The application from GHAC should not have been entertained in the first place as they have a low number of Burlington swimmers. Even if they get to the required number by September — what good is that? There is no benefit to BAD swimmers. How will you police it? Those numbers may be artificially increased given the feeling of helplessness our kids are currently experiencing, i.e. they may sign with GHAC in a panic. Most clubs ensure various age groups, or swimmers who have reached certain achievement levels, practice together. There are many reasons for this. The program is tailored to their ages and accomplishments. GHAC may say that they will leave their current swimmers in current pools and only have BAD swimmers in Burlington pools. That is simply not practical if one understands coaching limitations, the importance of learning from each other at various ages/levels, a sense of team, etc. It's clear GHAC is looking for more pool time and our kids should not have to go anywhere outside of Burlington or have new recruits avoided simply because kids from out of town are displacing their opportunity. There is only so much space and pools like Centennial are particularly important for "long invested" senior swimmers.

6) The stress placed on our kids has weakened their sense of security and fairness. They have worked hard and believe in their organization. In this past week, I have witnessed tears, anger, confusion and capitulation. The older swimmers, in particular, have had their belief in fairness and trust in those who represent them at the City extremely damaged - as is the case for the parents and many BAD volunteers and supporters. We have had swimmers leave the club over this mess. While there may be a few considering GHAC out of fear or a belief that there is no alternative, most have gone to Milton or Oakville as they have no desire to endure this uncertainty or be forced into a club they don't want to be part of.

7) I heard from one City representative that the Mayor and Counsellors don't get involved with procurement due to potential conflicts of interest. This is different than normal

procurement. This is a club that has operated for 40 years as a not-for-profit and on top of this they have been active in the community. I am sure the BAD representatives can outline their good work. Common sense tells me GHAC received preferential treatment (they didn't qualify in the first place) and whether there is a degree of culpability on both sides (City or BAD) doesn't matter. The correct approach is to not seek blame. Rather, all parties should simply learn from it and the City should make the correction immediately. GHAC took a risk and it appears they tried to push themselves into Burlington to the detriment of our kids. Quite frankly, I think that is shameful. In their scramble to raise the number of Burlington kids, they are trying to solicit ours which is not consistent with the swim community's normal protocol. We don't poach from other clubs. In my mind, if city policies bring us to this kind of scenario, something must change and it will take the members of Council and the Mayor to do so. There has to be common sense and a better system of escalation before it gets to this stage and/or preference given to renewals of long time reliable organizations. We know that other clubs/cities understand this is a terrible precedent and have expressed their position in support of BAD. I can understand why they may feel threatened — if this can happen to BAD, it can happen to them? This has been a colossal waste of time and money for BAD and the City.

8) With regard to community involvement and representation: a) BAD carries a **Burlington Aquatic Devilray's** banner wherever they go - not Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club which provides little direct recognition b) our community efforts are within Burlington - not thinly spread across a range of communities knowing there is always limited time to devote to these kinds of activities, and c) meets are held in Burlington which brings families and supporters from across the country for the benefit of Burlington businesses as they seek accommodation, food and activities. Will this be the case with GHAC who is obviously conducting meets in places outside of Burlington today --- one would think they must provide at least some degree of loyalty to other communities? It is quite clear that any pool time allotted to GHAC will be at the expense of lesser focus on Burlington.

I want to give you a greater understanding as to the sense of team and family that these kids enjoy and want to preserve. They feel a real sense of loyalty. As a grandparent, we usually aren't involved in the day-to-day scheduling that my daughter and son-in-law manage with the administrative notices, payments, travel and time commitments, etc. I try to enjoy the kids and the sport from a distance although "it takes a village to raise a child". With three of their four kids in BAD my husband and I often assist with the effort to get them to practices and meets. A couple of years ago, some members went to a swim camp in Spain and my husband and I joined the group. The kids got to meet International swimmers and observe how they trained. They were able to take in some tourist attractions as well. It was a valuable educational experience while building an even greater sense of team and family. During that time, we got a chance to chat with the Head Coach in a casual manner. He is usually a somewhat reserved and focused individual, but he told us about his greatest source of pride during his BAD leadership. I believe he said, four of his BAD swimmers went on to become doctors and others engineers and professional in various disciplines ---and on and on. That is the essence of what is being taken away as you need that sense of family and long term involvement to achieve that kind of pride.

I respectfully ask that you consider these points. I am sure there are many more that will be made by BAD. Just look at the video that Halton News created about a BAD hosted meet at Nelson Pool the weekend before this controversy surfaced. My granddaughter was featured in the video — not planned but simply a swimmer who happened to be available for comment. Her and her friends remarks said it all. Unfortunately, the smile on her face has been wiped away.

Please help our Burlington kids!

Sincerely,
Pam Pitz

Date: July 4, 2025

To:

City of Burlington
Recreation Services Department
426 Brant Street
Burlington, ON L7R 3Z6

Subject: Request for Pool Time Allocation for Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD)

Dear City of Burlington Officials,

I am writing on behalf of the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD), a long-standing and valued member of the Burlington community for over 40 years. Our club is composed of local families and children who come together to swim for camaraderie, fitness, and competitive excellence. We are proud to represent Burlington and to have contributed positively to the community through our programs and events.

We are deeply concerned about the current allocation of city pool time, which threatens the continued operation of our club. As a team made up mostly of Burlington residents, it is only fair and reasonable that our families benefit from the tax dollars they contribute. It is disheartening to see pool time being granted to a club from Hamilton, while our own local athletes are left without access to the facilities their families help fund.

Moreover, we have observed recruitment videos being filmed in front of Burlington facilities by this same club. This not only undermines the spirit of community investment but also sends a troubling message to our young athletes—that their city does not prioritize their development or recognize their contributions.

The financial implications of this shift are also deeply concerning. Families who are now being directed to join the new club face a significant increase in monthly fees—up to **\$450 per month**, which represents a **42% increase** over current costs. *(These figures specifically reflect the cost increase our family would face for our daughter, who currently swims at a competitive level.)* While both clubs appear to operate as non-profits, the cost to families is not comparable. This increase will likely push many children out of the sport due to financial constraints, limiting access to swimming for those who cannot afford such a steep rise in fees.

The Burlington Aquatic Devilrays have consistently invested in this city by being responsible, engaged, and community-minded as evidenced by our participation in many municipal events such as the Terry Fox Walk, as well as food and clothing drives. We now respectfully ask the City of Burlington to invest in its own citizens by ensuring that our club is granted the pool time it needs to continue serving the youth and families of Burlington.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and work collaboratively toward a solution that supports our local athletes and strengthens our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Don & Shannon Perkins

As members of the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD)

****A Heartfelt Appeal to Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and Burlington City council.**

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Esteemed Members of Council,

I am writing to you today as a parent whose heart is breaking watching my child and hundreds of other Burlington children face the devastating loss of their beloved swimming home. The Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD) has been more than just a swim club for our family—it has been the cornerstone of my daughter's confidence, friendships, and dreams.

**The Heart of Our Community**

For over four decades, BAD has been nurturing young swimmers in Burlington, transforming nervous beginners into confident athletes who carry themselves with pride both in and out of the water. My daughter is one of nearly seven classmates from [REDACTED] school who have found their second family at BAD. Watching these children support each other through victories and defeats, celebrating personal bests together, and forming friendships that extend far beyond the pool deck has been one of the greatest joys of my parenting journey.

The confidence my daughter has gained through BAD extends into every aspect of her life. She stands taller in school presentations, approaches challenges with determination, and has learned the invaluable lesson that hard work and perseverance lead to achievement. This transformation didn't happen overnight—it was carefully cultivated by dedicated coaches and the supportive community that BAD has fostered within our city.

**A Source of Pride for Burlington**

BAD swimmers don't just represent themselves—they represent Burlington. When they compete across Ontario and beyond, they carry our city's name with honor[3][2]. Some of our athletes have even progressed to compete at national levels, showing the world the caliber of talent that emerges from our Burlington pools. These young champions are living proof that when we invest in our youth, they rise to meet and exceed our highest expectations.

How can we explain to these dedicated young athletes that their home pool—the very facility where they've trained for years, where they've learned to push their limits, where they've dreamed of representing Canada at the Olympics—is being handed over to a club from Hamilton? The irony is not lost on us that Burlington residents are being displaced from Burlington facilities while our tax dollars continue to fund these very pools.

**The Devastating Impact**

The administrative technicality that has led to this situation affects approximately 400 young swimmers and their families[2]. These aren't just numbers—they're children who wake up excited for practice, teenagers who've found their passion, and families who've built their schedules around the sport that brings them together. The club maintains more than 85%

Burlington residency, meeting the city's requirements, yet a paperwork error threatens to destroy what has taken decades to build.

My daughter asks me daily when she'll see her teammates again, when she can get back in the pool with her coaches, when things will return to normal. I find myself at a loss for words, struggling to explain how bureaucratic processes can override common sense and community values.

A Plea for Our Children's Future

The young swimmers at BAD don't just dream of weekend competitions—many harbor genuine aspirations of representing Canada at the Olympics. These aren't fanciful childhood dreams; they're goals supported by proven coaching, proper facilities, and a track record of success. When we remove their training ground, we're not just disrupting their current routine—we're potentially derailing Olympic dreams that could bring honor to both our swimmers and our city.

The petition supporting BAD's reinstatement has gathered tremendous community support, demonstrating that this issue extends far beyond our immediate swimming families. Burlington residents recognize that BAD represents the best of what our city can offer its young people: opportunity, excellence, and community spirit.

Our Urgent Request

We respectfully and urgently request that you:

1. **Immediately reinstate BAD's pool access** while any legal or administrative issues are resolved
2. **Prioritize Burlington residents** in the allocation of Burlington pool time
3. **Recognize the community impact** of displacing 400 local families for an administrative oversight
4. **Support the Olympic dreams** of our young athletes who have made our city proud

The children of BAD have done nothing wrong. They've trained faithfully, competed honorably, and represented Burlington with distinction. They deserve better than to have their swimming careers disrupted by bureaucratic technicalities.

A Community United

As elected representatives of Burlington, you have the power to ensure that our pools serve our residents first. The decision to potentially award Burlington's pool time to Hamilton's Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club sends a troubling message about our city's priorities. Our children are watching, our community is watching, and the swimming world is watching how Burlington treats its own.

I implore you to look beyond the paperwork and see the faces of the children whose dreams hang in the balance. Consider the parent volunteers who've devoted countless hours to building this program, the coaches who've nurtured Olympic hopefuls, and the families who've chosen to call Burlington home partly because of the opportunities we offer our youth.

Please don't let administrative processes override the human impact of this decision. Please don't break the hearts of children who've done nothing but train hard and dream big. Please ensure that Burlington pools remain the home of Burlington swimmers.

The future Olympians training in our pools today will remember how their community supported them in their time of need. Let's make sure they remember Burlington as the city that stood behind its young athletes when it mattered most.

With sincere hope and urgency,

Rajdeep Choudhury

Proud parent of a Burlington Aquatic Devilrays swimmer *Burlington resident and taxpayer*

"We feel we are part of the city and today, I feel like our club is an orphan. Something is missing and I'm not very sure what we did wrong." - Sergei Soloukhin, Head Coach, Burlington Aquatic Devilrays

"As a lifelong Burlington resident who has benefited directly from the parks and recreation programming, I am disheartened by the pool allocation process. Although we were new to the competitive swim world, as soon as my daughter discovered the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays, we knew that we had found a great fit for our very active child. The club is about more than swimming, it is about friendship and teamwork. It is a place our whole family has become members of as swimmers and volunteers. It is extremely unfortunate that the city processes threaten the stability for these swimmers every five years. Swimmers and youth deserve consistent programming. The disruptions for any team to potentially lose their pool time, each time the five year process is up is just not a model that should be in place. We kindly ask that BAD receive the time in Burlington pools, for our Burlington swimmers as we did before. We would like to continue to benefit from our own pools, our city pools and continue to represent Burlington with pride. Thank you for being open to listening to our concerns."

Samantha Beckett
Ward 3

Good afternoon, City Clerk,

We intend to speak to the City's recent RFP decision on competitive youth swimming pool access, which we believe has been handled in a way that is unfair, unjust, and inconsistent with both community values and the City's own Framework for Community Recreation.

This issue affects hundreds of Burlington youth, their families, and our community at large. It is imperative that our voices are heard directly, and that Council understands the harm caused by this flawed process.

We will not let Burlington children be left behind.

Sergei Soloukhin

Yuriy Bepalov , Burlington Aquatic Devilrays, Age Group Coach

I have worked as a swimming coach all of my life since graduating with a PhD. My family came to Canada in 1998 and I pursued Canadian coaching credentials to continue my career as a swimming coach. The best fit for me was the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays club. Throughout all of these years I have had many opportunities to leave and join another club . But BAD was and is my home. I was welcomed there with open hearts. Now, almost 25 years later I am still with BAD and my heart is with them.

Yuriy Bepalov
Age Group Coach
Burlington Aquatic Devilrays

To: Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and Members of Burlington City Council
From: Family of The Burlington Aquatic Devilrays Swim Club
Date: July 3/25
Subject: Request for Support in Restoring Facility Access for Burlington Aquatic Devilrays

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Council,

First, thank you for your leadership and service to our city. Your commitment to listening to the voices of Burlington families means a great deal, especially at moments like this when our community needs your support.

We are writing to you as parents. Our 10 year old is a proud member of the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays Swim Club (BAD), and our family is heartbroken. We've just learned that due to a technical issue in the City's RFP process, this long-standing community club may lose access to the municipal pools it has called home for over 40 years.

To be clear, we understand this wasn't a decision made by you or the City Council. But we are reaching out to ask for your help in making things right, for the 400 swimmers who call this team their second home.

From what we understand, BAD's RFP submission was rejected because of a documentation issue, specifically a request for a "current and valid certificate of incorporation" which doesn't exist in the form required for legacy non-profits like ours. The club submitted a Certificate of Status to show it's in good standing, but it appears that wasn't accepted. And now, because of this misunderstanding, hundreds of kids, most of them Burlington residents, are at risk of losing access to their team, their training, and their community.

For many of these kids, swimming is so much more than a sport. For my child, it's everything. It's where they've found confidence, discipline, and a sense of belonging. It's where they feel safe, motivated, and proud. It's where the coaches and older swimmers cheer them on and help them grow. It's where they've learned to show up early, try their hardest, and support their teammates.

To think this might be taken away because of a technicality is devastating. We're not a big corporation or an outside group. We're Burlington families. We pay for the pool time, volunteer at meets, drive our kids to 6 a.m. practices, and cheer from the stands. The club spends over \$20,000 a month on facility rentals, all funded by parents like me. We bring hundreds of visitors to Burlington during meets. We're part of the fabric of this city.

We fully support fair, transparent processes and believe in accountability. But we also believe that this situation deserves a second look. A documentation issue shouldn't erase 40 years of service, community impact, and the hopes of 400 young athletes.

Please, if there's anything you or Council can do, whether it's revisiting the RFP, offering an interim solution, or simply opening the door to a conversation, we are ready and eager to work with the City. We just want our kids back in the water, with the team that has shaped who they are becoming.

Thank you again for your time, your care, and your leadership. I hope you'll consider advocating for a resolution that keeps this incredible program alive for the next generation of Burlington swimmers.

With gratitude,

Andrea Gill and Blair Gunby