

Good morning,

In reference to the Monday's meeting in regards to contract for swimming club I would likely to express how important GHAC is in our family life.

Thanks to GHAC my son is not only swimming pre competitively but also is making friends. He has difficulty with social interaction and struggles with anxiety but staff creates environment where no kid feels left behind. He is always well taken care of. Current situation is learning lesson for city staff and all of us.

We need to learn to co-exist with other clubs. Monopoly is not good as it will not give you a choice.

I strongly believe that GHAC won contract and should be given opportunity to demonstrate that is able to serve 85% of Burlington residence but I also believe that from next time city should consider fair sharing through all swimming clubs. More choice is more opportunity for our kids.

Regards  
Anna

Dear Councillor

I am writing to you in support of the Competitive swim team, GHAC. My son has been swimming with GHAC for over 10 years, and I have been swimming with the GHAC masters program for 7 years. We have both found the team to be supportive, challenging, flexible and a very positive experience. Their motto "Making fast swimming fun" is seen and lived every day in the pools where GHAC trains and competes.

It is my understanding that GHAC was recently awarded with the contract as the competitive swim program for Burlington City pools. This was done through a fair and unbiased proposal process, and GHAC was very happy to once again be swimming in Burlington pools as we had been doing prior to 2020. It is also my understanding that another competitive team has appealed the decision and that the contract that was awarded fairly and in good faith to GHAC may be revoked. I do not support the revocation of the contract.

Although my son and I don't live in Burlington, many of his friends and teammates do live in Burlington and would appreciate not having to leave the city in order to train with their team. They like the fun, flexible and supportive environment at GHAC. Many of the GHAC coaches also live in Burlington, and would be happy to further build the team in their own home town.

Finally, although some swimmers may come from out of town to use the Burlington pools, ultimately it brings business to Burlington. When my son and I used to train at Aldershot pool prior to 2020, we didn't just swim and leave. We swam and then we went out for breakfast or dinner in Burlington. We picked up groceries in Burlington. We ran errands and picked up items we needed in Burlington. I went for chiropractic treatment in Burlington while my son was swimming. Us being able to swim in Burlington benefitted Burlington businesses. Even today, I will swim at Nelson Pool in Burlington, and after my swim I will shop at Healthy Planet in Burlington.

In closing, I encourage you to uphold the decision to award GHAC the contract for Burlington competitive swim program. It is a fantastic swim program and will benefit the Burlington community. Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like to discuss this further.

Kathryn Newberry  
Swimmer and swim mom - Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club.

Dear Members of the Clerk's Office,

As a parent of a competitive swimmer and a proud member of the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC), I would like to express my wholehearted support for the club and its continued access to pool facilities in Burlington.

I am incredibly proud that my daughter swims for GHAC. She looks forward to every practice with enthusiasm and joy. Being part of this team is something she truly values — she enjoys the atmosphere, the people, the coaches, and the opportunity to train and grow.

Since joining GHAC, my daughter has not only made consistent progress in her performance, but she has also developed confidence, resilience, and strong leadership skills. With the support of her coaches, she has learned to set goals and achieve them through discipline and determination. She has become stronger both physically and mentally, and I believe that much of her personal growth is thanks to the positive, respectful, and empowering environment that GHAC provides.

We are sincerely grateful for the City of Burlington's past support of local swimming, and we respectfully ask that this support continue. GHAC plays an essential role in the lives of many families, helping young athletes thrive both in and out of the pool.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anastasia Belevitina

I'm sending this message in support of GHAC. Our family has belonged to the GHAC family for several years now and this organization is very professional and supportive of both recreational swimmers and competitive swimmers in the Golden Horseshoe area.

My daughter in particular has made friends from Dundas, Grimsby, Binbrook, Hamilton and Burlington since joining GHAC.

The Golden Horseshoe is a large area and thus provides them with a very diverse group of swimmers. My daughter has swam alongside para athletes through her years at GHAC and her beautiful understanding of inclusivity is largely because of this. GHAC has a huge parent volunteer base, which is necessary to run swim meets and creating opportunities for our swimmers.

I ask that you honour the legal contract that you have signed with GHAC. GHAC put in tremendous amount of work, in good faith, to ensure that all of the necessary requirements for the RFP were met. They have worked hard since 2020 to continue to service their Burlington swimmers in non-City owned facilities, but it is not time for the Burlington families who belong to GHAC to be able to train, once again, in your local pools.

Please respect and honour your contract with GHAC.

Sincerely,  
Diana Herrington  
Parent/volunteer of GHAC

Good morning,

I just wanted to take a moment to share my support for GHAC in the Burlington Swimming tender. I have been a Burlington Resident for 33 years, and my daughter swims with GHAC. They have a great program, and she loves swimming with them! It will be really great to have some more opportunities for her closer to home!

I hope you have a great day!

JJ Foulds  
Burlington Resident  
GHAC Parent

To Whom it May Concern,

My daughter has been a member of GHAC for 6 years. We are proud supporters of the club, not only because of the success our daughter has had, but because of what the club stands for. It prides itself on being inclusive, fair and respectful of athletes, parents, coaches and other clubs. GHAC abides by the rules set by safe sport, swim Ontario and in this instance the city of Burlington.

Continuing to have a presence in Burlington is a win for the city and athletes. GHAC has followed all requirements to put forward a well throughout RFP, my ask is that the city fairly evaluates all aspects of the submission.

Thank you  
Jen Doto

Hello,

I'd like to express my gratitude to GHAC in Burlington for providing high quality swim programming, coaching and a safe environment where my daughter has excelled in the sport.

We have seen month-over-month drastic improvements in her performance.

She's learned what it means to be part of a team, with Focus and discipline.

The meets have been fantastic opportunity to show what the kids have learned, refining their competitive spirit and is transferable to their academics.

We have many friends looking forward to joining and hopeful the club can move to 25m pools across the city.

Kindest regards,

Monica

Good Morning,

One area of swimming that has not been discussed in this process is high school swimming. Due to capacity issues in the Halton Region pools, the Burlington public high school swimmers host their meets at McMaster University and GHAC provides volunteers official for those meets. I have been the starter/referee (head on deck official) for those meets including City Championships. The City Championships are qualifiers for OFSAA.

Swim officials at all levels, including National and International events are volunteers. High school swimmers are not only club swimmers, but for the majority of them, this is their only exposure to competitive swimming. High school swimming is the most diverse swimming there is with swimmers from Special Olympics to International level competitors all competing in the same meets. OFSAA swimming is the largest swim meet in the country with over 2,000 swimmers qualifying.

Observations from over 12 years of involvement in competitive swimming (I have experience in several other sports with swimming being a new experience starting 12 years ago).

In the under 12 category, which is how most swim meets organize sessions, training is typically based on convenience for families. This is where you see more multiple sport athletes who look for flexibility in training. This was the case for my youngest daughter who was both a gymnast and swimmer from ages 6 to 10 when she retired from gymnastics to take on swimming as her primary sport. During those years she trained in both sports in Burlington.

Once swimmers reach 13, swim meets are structure differently to start preparing athletes for higher level competitions where some meets have preliminary and finals sessions. At this level, I have observed that swimmers look for compatibility with coaches. This is consistent with all sports even at the professional level. GHAC has 2 top level training groups where swimmers train with coaches that best suit their needs. An example is the para swimmer training. Para swimmers train with able bodied swimmers based on pace times and with coaches who specialize in training para athletes. The GHAC presenter at council on Monday has been named as the lead para coach for Team Ontario for the upcoming Canada Games. The para swimming program is a key training group for GHAC and has been observed by Swim Canada as a model for other clubs due to the integration of para and able bodied swimmers training together which promotes inclusive atmosphere.

I hope this has helped add some details to areas of swimming that have not yet been discussed.

Regards,

Stephen, Aldershot resident since 2012

Good morning,

I'm writing in strong support of the GHAC aquatic program, which was recently awarded pool time in Burlington.

As a parent of a swimmer who has been part of GHAC since 2021, I can confidently say that the club has played a critical role in our son's growth—not only as a swimmer but as a confident and resilient young person.

To provide some context, our son has been swimming in Burlington since he was just four months old. As non-residents, we paid the additional fees and committed to driving to every class at Aldershot and Tansley Woods pools. We were a dedicated part of the Burlington swim community until the pandemic closures in 2020 forced everything to pause. At that time, we had no choice but to join a more expensive private program in Burlington to ensure our son could continue swimming once restrictions eased.

It was during this uncertain time that GHAC came into our lives. They were offering programming at Hamilton local pools—often earlier than other facilities—and they welcomed our son with open arms. This opportunity allowed him to train in a larger pool, reconnect with the sport he loved, and build relationships during a time when connection was rare. With GHAC's support, he not only regained his confidence but also advanced to competitive status, developing both his skills and his love for the sport.

One of the most impactful experiences our son had with GHAC was forming a friendship with Charlie Giammichele, a world-class para-swimmer and truly inspirational figure. Despite the age difference, Charlie always made time for our son—offering encouragement, friendship, and a firsthand example of sportsmanship and inclusion. This relationship would not have been possible without GHAC's inclusive and community-focused environment.

GHAC has long been a pillar of swimming development in both Hamilton and Burlington. Their contribution to Burlington swimmers, families, and the broader community has been invaluable over the last 20 years. Bringing them back into Burlington's public pools would not only support existing swimmers but also strengthen the community of volunteers, coaches, and families who have thrived under their leadership.

Our swimmers—and our community—deserve access to programs like GHAC. I urge you to continue supporting their presence in Burlington public facilities.

Warm regards,  
Kristy Marinic

Swim parent, Volunteer, Swim Official

Hello,

As a parent of a 7-year-old just starting out in swimming, I want to share how grateful I am to have found GHAC. After trying out four different clubs, I can confidently say that GHAC stands out in the best possible way.

From the very beginning, the process of getting my daughter into the program was smooth, welcoming, and stress-free. Compared to the other clubs we explored, GHAC made everything feel so easy—and that means a lot when you're trying to support a young child's first steps into a sport.

Their pricing is also incredibly fair and more affordable than any of the other clubs we considered. On top of that, GHAC's policies around class compensation are thoughtful and flexible, which shows how much they truly care about families and their needs.

We feel lucky to have found a club that not only values excellence in swimming but also creates such a supportive and accessible environment for beginners. Thank you, GHAC, for making this experience such a positive one!

Thank you, Burlington city, for granting them pool time this season, I am sure you will feel a big difference

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Eman Tadrous

Good morning, my name is Alena Skrinskas and I am writing to you in support of the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club. My son swims with GHAC and has been with the club for about 6 years. We have been very pleased with the level of parent and swimmer involvement, flexibility of scheduling and communication from the club over the years. The coaches, organizers, parents are extremely supportive of one another. My son has been both challenged and encouraged over the years with our club. It is a family type atmosphere.

Being able to expand GHAC simply means that we would be able to include more swimmers and parents into the family.

Thank you for your time,

Alena

Good morning,

I am writing to voice my comments about recent aquatic RFP for Burlington and I would appreciate if they could be transferred to City Council before the planned internal meeting on Friday, July 11.

As a previous citizen of Burlington and current parent of a GHAC swimmer, I am following the recent developments with awarded contact with a lot of passion and I listened carefully the delegations on Monday virtually.

I am surprised that the city council is currently trying to intervene in the procurement process that is fair, transparent and ethical. In 2020, the mayor Marianne Meed Ward announced this approach using the following:

“Purchasing decisions are best made on value for service, not political influence... It is imperative that the process be administered by staff and continue in a fair and impartial manner.”

If nothing changed this time and the only difference is the club that won the competition, why would the City Council use its power to change the process? Why would the city council scrap a fair, transparent and ethical process to meet the louder voice of a proponent that lost and not to follow its own process and work with the organization that met EVERY SINGLE REQUIREMENTS of your process, treated you respectfully and met the defeat of 2020 with respect instead of creating a petition and mounting the social pressure?

I acknowledge that the situation is difficult, but the current city council approach is confusing and undermines the principles the City Council chose to follow.

I am respectfully asking to reconsider the possible intervention in the already finalized procurement process.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Natalia Bourenane

City Council,

Looking forward to hearing a just and fair resolution to this.

As both a Burlington resident since 2016 and GHAC parent since 2020, GHAC has been an amazing organization for my swimmer to grow. They provide flexibility to allow us to attend practices around our family's schedule. Travelling so far for practices has been the biggest challenge. My swimmer has been able to progress from novice to competitive level while maintaining family times and around activities of my other 2 children who are not in swimming.

It seemed clear from the special committee meeting that using the RFP process for aquatics is not a desirable future solution for anyone. However, I recommend honouring the city's own RFP process, and legally binding contract because it would be a disservice for those Burlington residents who've had to endure distance hardships for the past 5 years. Once the contract term is up, any future process can be implemented for Burlington residents.

Ryan.

Hello,

I would like to demonstrate our families support for the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC) to retain the awarded RFP to utilize the City of Burlington's pools for competitive swimming.

We have been with GHAC for three years and our daughter has loved every single moment of swimming with GHAC. As Burlington residents, we started swimming at the Goldfish and YMCA with GHAC, now that our daughter has been in the select program she has been swimming four times a week at MacMaster. It would be wonderful for Burlington swimmers to have more opportunities to swim in Burlington and not have to go to Hamilton all the time.

My daughter loves the coaches and we have had such a great experience with GHAC, they are timely in responding to our inquiries and always available. They have grown an amazing peer community for our daughter as well as parents and have created opportunities for parents to connect and help solidify their teams.

We are excited for our youngest to also join GHAC this fall and are looking forward to more opportunities to swim with this amazing club in Burlington.

Finally, I have to absolutely commend GHAC for their inclusiveness, and training for all types of swimmers including those with disabilities. I'm very proud to stand behind an organization who caters to ALL!.

Please let me know if you have any questions,

Lucie and Mark Guichelaar

ADM-09-25 Correspondence GHAC  
July 10, 2025 Special Council

Just writing to speak about ghac swimming club my grandson who lives with me and has some disabilities swims with them for the last 2 years it has been wonderful for him ..the instructions are constant and so positive .. just wanted you to know how pleased we are .. and para swimmers are all inclusive .. hope for your support

thank you joanne peters

Our family just wants to share our positive experiences with GHAC swim club. In the years we have been part of the GHAC family, we have been very happy with their empathy, encouragement, engaging coaching and commitment to swimmers. Throughout this challenging process, they have also welcomed new swimmers and shared positive messages in the media about the swim community. Thank you for listening to my short words of support for this incredible organization.

Bonnie MacDonald

Dear Burlington Council,

I was thrilled to hear that the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC) will be returning to Burlington. As a former athlete with the club, this news brought me great joy. GHAC has always stood out for its incredible coaching staff, who support swimmers both in and out of the pool. Their commitment to athlete development, both as swimmers and individuals is truly exceptional.

Throughout my time with GHAC, I witnessed their inclusive approach within the club. Whether it's working with young athletes, para swimmers or anyone in between, the club ensures that every swimmer has a place and an opportunity to succeed.

It's exciting to know that GHAC will once again be part of the Burlington community, supporting local athletes and continuing its legacy of excellence. This is fantastic news for swimmers in our city, and I look forward to seeing the club make a strong return.

Sincerely,  
Ava Shillingford

ADM-09-25 Correspondence GHAC  
July 10, 2025 Special Council

My wife and I are parents of a competitive swimmer who is a member of GHAC. We are also Burlington residents. We appreciate this club's inclusive, flexible, and inclusive philosophy.

We hope the city of Burlington will honor its contract with GHAC.

Dan Milkovich and Carolyn Cook

To whom it may concern,

This is just a message to reaffirm GHAC as a professional swimming organization. My daughter has been swimming with GHAC since she was five and is now 14. The coaches are well educated, and inspire young athletes to their full potential and natural abilities.

They offer multiple swimming locations and times which makes it convenient for families to choose which options work for them.

It would be a great benefit if GHAC could expand its reach into Burlington and also use their pools.

Thank you for considering them.  
Nicole Bawolin

Hello Clerks,

Our family has been part of the GHAC swim team for close to three years now, and it's been a truly wonderful experience. Our daughter has loved the water since she was a baby, and we've always enrolled her in community pool programs.

When we began looking into competitive swimming for her, many organizations weren't open to accepting swimmers without a competitive background. After weeks of searching, we found GHAC — and it was truly a blessing.

The GHAC team welcomed her without pressure, allowing her to participate at her own pace. This supportive environment helped her not only improve her swimming but also develop a healthy sense of competition and confidence. Thanks to the incredible coaches, we saw her grow both in and out of the pool.

Her swim times improved dramatically, and she proudly earned three placements at her inter-school swim meets in 2024 and 2025. Beyond that, her academics improved, and she became more responsible and focused. At just 13, she volunteered nearly 50 hours at Burlington community pools after earning her Bronze Cross, Bronze Medallion, and CPR certification — all thanks to the training and encouragement from GHAC.

These community service hours weren't for school credit; she simply wanted to give back and help younger kids — with her long-term goal being to become a lifeguard at Burlington pools.

We are deeply grateful to the Town of Burlington for supporting the GHAC team. GHAC isn't just about great coaching — it nurtures growth, responsibility, and kindness in its swimmers.

Warm regards,  
Monika

Hello,

Please see below in support of GHAC for July 10 meeting. Thank you.

As parents of two young men on the Autism Spectrum, our journey through academic and extracurricular programs has been anything but easy. Twenty-two years ago, I made the difficult decision to leave my career in order to focus fully on their development, as traditional support services simply did not meet their needs.

Over the years, our sons explored numerous sports and activities in search of a place where they could belong, grow, and thrive. That place turned out to be the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC), which they joined in 2014. From the beginning, GHAC stood apart by not only welcoming our children but also providing meaningful accommodation, consistent encouragement, and unwavering support.

The coaches at GHAC have demonstrated a rare level of dedication. They believed in our sons' potential and refused to give up on them. Thanks to this commitment, both boys have flourished in competitive Para swimming. A is close to completing his international classification, while N has successfully competed at the provincial level.

Today, GHAC's Para team includes fourteen swimmers, and the club continues to be a model of true inclusion. In an era where many organizations claim to be inclusive, GHAC simply is. It has become a second home to our sons and an essential part of their lives.

We are proud to support GHAC and deeply grateful for the role they have played and continue to play in our family's journey.

Best,

Fricano Family

Dear Burlington Clerk,

I am writing to you as a Burlington resident and as the parent of a 10year old boy. My son is an active and bright kid who also has disabilities (including a cerebral palsy diagnosis) that affect his ability to participate in sport and rec in the way other kids do.

It can be very difficult to find accessible sport options, even when kids with disabilities should have the same opportunities as anyone else. It took nearly 3 years of private 1:1 lessons for my son to learn to swim independently. With a lot of work he made enough progress to swim with a para-swim program, and I emailed Swim Canada to research. It took some weeks, but I found GHAC and signed him up for their novice program. GHAC has a program for disabled kids (para swim) that gives them the same access as other kids their age in the club. It has meant that we have had to travel to Hamilton sometimes though, when there are no times in Burlington or when he needs to practice diving off blocks. Through GHAC he's had the chance to meet other para swimmers and ask older athletes questions about their journey. I am very glad we found them.

You can imagine my delight when I heard that GHAC would be accessing expanded pool time in Burlington. This opens up new options for my son - for example all summer GHAC novice practices are in Hamilton, and I can't get him there reliably. I was SO HAPPY to hear that our public pools would be open to a club with a real and demonstrated commitment to inclusion. A very Canadian commitment to human rights tells us that disabled kids should have access to the same pool time as their peers. (I have no idea if this was written into RFP requirements, but if not it should have been.)

I am deeply concerned to see public officials discussing overturning what seems to have been a very transparent competitive RFP process. I see my own councillor asking questions about governance and risk, and I hope that she and others are asking "what happens if we tear up a legal contract and put into place an agreement that walks back pool time for para swimmers?" Or "how do we make sure kids like my son get the same opportunities as all their Burlington neighbours without cerebral palsy?" For my family, this is a really important issue of fairness and rights.

GHAC has been good to us in our short time with them. I have been deeply impressed by their "we go high" attitude during this stressful time - them not speaking negatively about others is totally in line with the ethos I've seen at this club. I wish them well and I ask, as a Burlington parent, that you please treat them and their swimmers fairly. Please also keep foremost in your mind the rights of young Burlington athletes with disabilities, who access public facilities through GHAC's para swim program and who shouldn't lose out because things have been made political.

Thank you

Kimberly

Dear Burlington City Council,

With regards to the RFP process that has been implemented for competitive swim clubs to utilize City of Burlington pools, I would like to share some thoughts as a swim parent who has supported both BAD and GHAC. Our family left BAD just over a year ago and joined GHAC, just prior to regional and provincial swim meets (OYJ and Summer Festivals).

- For our family, GHAC has offered a welcoming, supportive environment. Both of my children have told me that they feel they are receiving excellent coaching and support from GHAC. All of our swim practices are currently at McMaster University and the commute to and from can be lengthy. This is a sacrifice that we make given the high quality coaching and programming that we have access to with GHAC. But with this said, there likely is no person who cherishes sitting in traffic and therefore, access to Burlington pools is a significant benefit for us and for families in Burlington.

- I can understand that the decision to award GHAC with pool time in the city is clearly devastating for BAD as BAD has not traditionally operated in any other pools outside of the city. A possible solution to this issue is for BAD to consider finding pool time outside of Burlington or with non-city run facilities. Case in point, I am aware that the Oakville swim club has used pool time at McMaster. Also, when GHAC was not awarded pool time in the city pools from 2020 - 2025, GHAC approached non-city run facilities to try to maintain their programming.

- If the purpose of the City is to support competitive swimming in Burlington, it is important for the City to understand that any swim club would need to have the required number of officials, particularly higher level officials to run sanctioned swim meets in accordance with the requirements set forth by Swim Ontario ([Swim Ontario - Bulletins](#)). Even to run an in-house time trial or for a closed invitational meet, a swim club would require at least one level 4 or 5 official. I would encourage the city to investigate this topic with both clubs.

yours truly,  
Karen Kimura

Dear City Council,

I am writing to express my support for the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC) in regards to the RFP pool allocation process. I grew up swimming for GHAC swimming for the club for the better part of a decade. GHAC has always felt like a second family to me, welcoming, supportive, and genuinely invested in my growth both in and out of the pool. Through positive and healthy coaching techniques, they helped me build confidence and stay motivated, all while getting stronger and faster every single day. With their years of experience I accomplished more in swimming then I ever thought possible. I think that's the difference at GHAC: they care about the whole person.

I urge the city of Burlington to think carefully about changing the results of this RFP process. GHAC has proven that they offer competitive swim programming that prioritizes long term development, confidence and a genuine love for swimming.

Shouldn't Burlington residents get the best?

Emilie Vecera

Dear Burlington Council,

Thank you for granting GHAC (Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club) access to pool time in the city. This support allows more families to benefit from their outstanding, inclusive swim program.

When my children swam competitively, GHAC stood out for its exceptional coaching and commitment to the holistic development of each athlete. The program fostered not just swimming skills, but also confidence, resilience, and lasting friendships in a welcoming, supportive environment.

It's wonderful to see more Burlington families gain access to such a positive experience. Your support reflects a strong commitment to youth, community, and inclusivity in sport.

Regards,  
Steven Shillingford

To whom it may concern,

There has been a lot said in recent day about the GHAC swim club and I would like to share a little bit about my family's experience. My eldest daughter began swimming with GHAC at Goldfish pool in Burlington in 2022. At our very first practice the Head Coach was there to greet the parents and swimmers, welcoming us to the club. He took the time to give us some detailed information about how the swim season would look, and took time to answer any questions. This is a prime example of what GHAC is, a welcoming community built on trust, respect and putting athletes first.

Fast forward to 2024 all three of my children, and myself are member of GHAC. I have seen first hand how much confidence swimming has given my children. They look forward to meets, and spending times with their coaches. I myself came out of "retirement" after 20 years away from the pool, due to the positive community. GHAC allows me to train alongside my daughter, how cool is that! Instead of being a parent in the stands, I can train in a lane alongside my daughter. It's been such a motivator, and positive bonding opportunity for us. I attended my first meet, racing alongside teenagers as all of GHAC meets are open to all ages and levels. I was supported by not only my the coach's and my other master teammates, but also many of the parents. A few even stating how motivating it is for them, encouraging them to also get back in the pool.

GHAC is such an important part of our Burlington community, allowing kids and parents of all ages and abilities to engage in a life long love of swimming.

Sincerely,  
Andrea Bourgeois Rawlinson

Hello,

My name is Shereen Shaikh and my swimmer is xxxxxxxx. We feel very strongly that GHAC is a fantastic swim club for the Burlington community. We have been with the club for almost 3 years and have had to travel far distances for xxx to swim 6-7 times/ week. It has taken a toll on our family. Please know that GHAC is a wonderful choice for Burlington families. They are caring and inclusive. I wouldn't have my child swim with any other club.

Thank you,

Shereen Shaikh

Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Burlington City Council

**Re: Aquatic RFP Process and Swimming in Burlington**

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Council,

As a swimmer with the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC), and someone who grew up training in Burlington, I wanted to express my excitement that GHAC will be back in the City of Burlington Pools, and share my thoughts on the recent RFP decision regarding competitive swimming pool access.

I've been a proud member of GHAC for more than ten years. I trained at Angela Coughlan and Aldershot pools, and those pools weren't just places to swim—they were places where I grew up, developed friendships, and learned lessons that extended far beyond the lanes. Our coaches focus not just on speed, but on technique, progression, leadership, and personal growth. We live by the mantra: **“making fast swimming fun”**—and it isn't just a motto... it's our culture.

GHAC isn't just a swim team. It's a close-knit community made up of swimmers of all abilities and backgrounds - young athletes and national-level competitors, Olympic stream and paralympic stream swimmers - training together and supporting each other. The club offers flexibility in schedules and training locations, making it easier for families to stay committed to the sport. For me, GHAC has been a second home and a place where I've grown not only as a swimmer, but as a person. GHAC never turns anyone away. In fact, I know swimmers who were turned away from BAD but were welcomed with open arms by GHAC.

I understand how BAD families are feeling, as we were in the same position five years ago. I know they feel loyal to their club, just as we do. If I could speak to them individually, here is what I would say:

- I know change is hard, but GHAC is very welcoming, and you will immediately feel part of the family
- GHAC coaches are very skill task focused, we spend a lot of time working on stroke correction. In fact, we do a lot of clinics and one-on-one sessions to focus on stroke technique

- There is flexibility in the programming, and you can tailor your schedule to accommodate other sports, school etc.
- We live by the mantra “making fast swimming fun”. While we train hard, we are also having a lot of fun and laughing.

I recently graduated from Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School and am preparing to begin university. I was fortunate to receive several scholarship offers and visited multiple schools before making my decision. In the end, I chose McMaster University, so I continue training with the GHAC coaching team, who also coach at McMaster. Grey Fairley and the GHAC staff have invested deeply in me, as they do all of our swimmers, not only as coaches but as mentors who have shaped my character, discipline, and confidence. Their support has had a profound impact on my life, both in and out of the pool. I genuinely believe that my swimming future will be brightest if I stay local and continue with GHAC.

I understand that BAD is pushing back, and being very vocal about the decision. I hope that the council members can leave politics out of the process. Let the merits of each club be evaluated, and the best team awarded the contract. Regardless of the outcome of an RFP, some people will be happy, and some will not. As long as the RFP process was fair and transparent, the decision should stay. GHAC is a great club, and Burlington families will have a wonderful, caring, supportive, inclusive program to grow and flourish with.

Sincerely,

BL  
Proud GHAC Swimmer

A very quick note to say how thrilled we are that GHAC will be back in Burlington.

We have had the pleasure of swimming with GHaC, even though we live in Burlington, for over 8 years. The community GHAC has built is strong, unified, supportive and with great coaching helps kids achieve their swimming goals.

It is a great choice for Burlington!

Thank you!  
Andrea

Good afternoon,

I am writing to share my positive experience with the GHAC swim team. My two children have been part of the club for over 3 years, and we reside in Oakville. Despite the distance, we have always been incredibly happy with the support and community the team provides.

The commitment and dedication of GHAC have made our experience so rewarding, and we are truly grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a supportive and welcoming group. Although it requires us to travel from Oakville to Hamilton, it has always been worth it for the development of our children and the friendships they've built.

It would be amazing if the City of Burlington could offer support to families like ours—those who live in Burlington or nearby areas—so that our children can continue swimming with GHAC within the city. This would make a huge difference for many families who are committed to the club but face challenges with the distance.

Thank you for supporting this wonderful club and its athletes. GHAC has had a meaningful impact on our family, and we look forward to continuing our journey with them.

Sincerely,  
Shabnam

This email provides comments received at Service Burlington supporting the positive impact GHAC has in Burlington.

Theresa Sheppit has called to voice comment to the meeting today. The caller wanted to advise that they grew up in Burlington and moved back in 2014. Her daughter joined the club in 2019. The team is very compassionate and kind along with supportive of the children including the caller's child with Autism..

Since joining the club this child has been given opportunities to compete at Provincial swim matches and GHAC is very supportive in not separating swimmers. This team has given child the confidence to earn medals and rewards including MVP awarded in Grade 12 for the Nelson Swim Team. Child wouldn't have the confidence without the support of GHAC. This team is inclusive and everyone swims together.

Travelling to Hamilton prohibits travel due to traffic and congestion.

Caller is open to discuss the positive impact that GHAC has on City of Burlington.

Caller indicating that the daughter is going to travel to NFLD for 2025 Canadian Summer Games and is swimming for Team Ontario for the Para Swimmers. This wouldn't have been possible without GHAC.

Caller was also provided subsidy so the child could keep swimming over the summer.

Theresa Sheppit

To Whom It May Concern,

I have a daughter in GHAC swimming and fully support their winning bid for Burlington pool time.

We currently travel to Hamilton and beyond for all our swim meets, and practice at Goldfish pool multiple times a week from 7:45pm-9:15pm, this pool is quite small and doesn't have the driving blocks etc for proper practice all because this is the closest pool location for us.

We live in Burlington and would love a bigger swim club to support the Burlington demand.

I started looking 5 years ago when we were first entering the sport my daughter was 7/8 I was told about BAD and OAK so I applied for both to get tryout details etc. and I never ever heard back. I sent multiple requests also filled in the forms a few times and I emailed and nothing from BAD. OAK got back to me right away with a few tryout times we went and made the team. I did try again two seasons back and again nothing, I dug in a bit harder and asked mom groups for contacts I finally found someone and she said for my daughters age group they had no capacity or try out times for the season which I found odd but what was I going to do. So we went and tried out for GHAC and made that team.

I've had other swim parents tell me the exact same story about lack of response and no tryout times.

I'm not trying to bad mouth them I just wish if they were truly Burlington's team they would have open tryouts, communicate better, and have a larger capacity to try and meet demand for Burlington families is all.

I want all the kids to swim, and I know from experience GHAC is a great group, amazing coaches and have a lot of great swim meets. They are also very affordable and VERY flexible for swim practice, make up classes, and changes in schedules. This is dramatically different from our experience with OAK and we LOVE that GHAC understands the need to be flexible with families.

I watched city council yesterday and found it interesting that BAD did not want to talk to GHAC before the RFP but now they want to come to some common ground. In my opinion GHAC did the work, has previously and is currently being very professional about this situation and to me that says a lot about the people in charge.

Thank you for your time,  
Jen DeFrenza

Dear Members of Council,

I am writing again to express my deep concern regarding the ongoing discourse surrounding the recent awarding of the Competitive Youth Swimming contract to the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC).

The RFP processes conducted in both 2020 and 2025 were fair, transparent, and fully aligned with the City of Burlington's procurement policies. GHAC submitted a comprehensive 513-page proposal that clearly met all requirements and aligned with the City's stated objectives. In contrast, the incumbent organization failed to meet mandatory submission criteria and was disqualified accordingly.

It is important to highlight that prior to the 2025 RFP, GHAC proactively reached out to the incumbent to explore a shared service model—an approach that had worked in the past. That offer was declined. Now, following an unsuccessful bid, the incumbent is advocating for the very model they previously rejected. This raises a critical question: if they had won, would they be making the same appeal? Would they be reaching out to GHAC?

Throughout this process, GHAC has conducted itself with professionalism and respect, despite being the target of a misleading and negative public campaign. The City has now run this process twice, each time with fairness and integrity. So what has changed?

The City of Burlington now faces the risk of setting a troubling precedent—that contract awards are not final, and that public pressure can override due process. If a losing bidder can simply generate enough noise to force reconsideration, where does it end? What message does this send to future bidders about the value of following the rules?

In 2020, GHAC accepted the outcome with professionalism, used the feedback to improve, and returned stronger. They have consistently demonstrated integrity, inclusivity, and a deep commitment to the Burlington community. They deserve the same respect and certainty that any successful bidder should expect.

I urge Council to uphold the decision made through a fair and transparent process. To do otherwise would not only be unjust to GHAC and the families who support them, but would also undermine public confidence in the City's ability to manage future procurements with integrity.

Sincerely,

Jodi Nicholson  
Long-time GHAC Family Member & Supporter of the City of Burlington

Hi,

I wanted to take a moment to express how genuinely excited and grateful our family is that the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC) has been allocated pool time at City of Burlington facilities. As Burlington residents, we're thrilled to now have access to swim programs closer to home. This change not only provides convenience but also saves us significant time and money previously spent commuting to Hamilton for practices.

Our family had previously been part of the Burlington Aquatic Devilrays (BAD), but we chose to transition to GHAC because of the club's strong coaching expertise and the supportive, growth-oriented environment it offers for children. While GHAC has been a refreshing and positive change, the frequent travel—six to seven times per week—to Hamilton was certainly challenging. It's truly welcome news that we can now train locally.

It's also worth acknowledging that GHAC respected and abided by the outcome of the 2020 RFP process, even though it was not in their favour at the time. As decisions are being considered now, I kindly urge you to recognize and value professionalism, integrity, and ethical conduct in how this situation is handled moving forward.

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Regards,  
Aarathi Ramnath

Hello,

I am Alia, mother of Nadim, a para swimmer(s14) at GHAC club.

We came to Canada a year ago, we live in Vaughan & we go every day the whole way for training taking the 407! . Since we came to Canada,we tried to contact many clubs near us , but unfortunately they refused to accept my son due to professionals coaches how to deal with para swimmers or to spaces. GHAC was the most welcoming, professional & flexible club that accepted my son. They have a professionals coaches , they know how to deal very well with my son & actually my son is very happy with them.

Thank you 🙏

To who it may concern

My name is Ihab Ghaly

My son Nadim is 23 years old pro swimmer s14 he came from Egypt last July 2024 ...

Nadim was the fastest swimmer among autistic swimmers in Egypt ... he holds the best record in Egypt In. Butter fly , still is with his name still .

We live in Vaughan . We contacted all swimming clubs nearby ( Markam . Richmond hill , Vaughan ... all clubs )

The only club that accepted him was GHAC and we travel everyday from Vaughan to Hamilton to attend the training .. due to the fact as already mentioned that no nearby clubs had the intention to accept him or even to make a trial ( even we invloved Darda and she was trying her best still nearby clubs excuse was they don't have the facility although Nadim can swim with Normal people .

My opinion GHAC is the best swimming club in the area Speacially for special needs kids with high performance like my son Nadim .

GHAC didn't not only accepted him but they made him participate in more events that we never thought that he can swim like 200 im and 200 free .

GHAC are professional coaches , they know what they are doing very dedicated and well established

As long as Nadim swimming he will be with GHAC

Ihab Ghali

**Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Burlington City Council**  
**Re: Aquatic RFP Process and Swimming in Burlington**

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Council,

I understand you are receiving many letters regarding the recent RFP decision for Burlington pool time. As a Burlington resident 5 years ago, I witnessed the emotional toll and uncertainty this process brought, only with a different outcome. I'll aim to keep this message succinct and to the point.

- Regardless of what club a swimmer belongs to, they will speak highly of it. For every letter praising BAD and its contributions to the community, there are equally heartfelt sentiments from GHAC families who have had similarly positive and meaningful experiences.
- Five years ago, a comparable RFP process awarded all Burlington pool time to BAD, effectively displacing GHAC. At that time, GHAC families faced the same difficult choices that BAD families are facing now:
  - Stay loyal to their club and train wherever space could be found.
  - Transfer to a club outside Burlington (Hamilton, Milton, Oakville).
  - Continue training in Burlington under a different club banner.
- Following that decision, BAD gained many new members from GHAC—families who, for logistical or personal reasons, needed the convenience of swimming in Burlington.
- I cannot personally verify that BAD has been in this community for 40 years, but I do know that GHAC also has a long-standing and meaningful relationship with the City of Burlington, having served this community proudly for many years.
- It's been suggested that GHAC is a "Hamilton club." In truth, GHAC is a regional swim team that serves the Golden Horseshoe area - including Burlington, Hamilton, Stoney Creek, and Dundas.
- GHAC is a highly inclusive organization that welcomes **ALL** Burlington residents regardless of their talent, age (provided they can swim 25m), or physical or developmental abilities. GHAC does not turn swimmers away.
- The RFP requires that 85% of the pool time be used by Burlington residents. When GHAC last operated in Burlington prior to the previous RFP, nearly all swimmers were Burlington residents. We expect the same will be true moving forward.
- Five years ago, the RFP process appeared politically motivated. BAD parents and coaches indicated they had it "in the bag" as they knew they held strong political clout. In fact, that was confirmed to me when I was told directly by a Burlington Councilor that the City only wanted to work with one specific team, which aligned exactly with the result. This time, the process appears to have followed a more neutral and structured procurement framework—which should be respected.

What was the RFPs mandate?

to partner with a **qualified non-profit swim club** capable of delivering an **Inclusive developmental and competitive youth swim programming** for Burlington youth, while ensuring **local access, transparency, and value through a formal procurement structure**.

If Council accepted the outcome of the RFP five years ago, then it should also accept the results of this current process—regardless of whether the decision aligns with personal preference. I urge you to approach this situation with fairness and impartiality. The integrity of the RFP process and the long-term interests of Burlington's swim community depend on it.

Sincerely,

**Maria Macpherson**

Proud GHAC Parent

Hellos

My name is Luxmi, my family lives in ward 2 for the past 20 years.

I wanted to take a minute to share how excited and grateful our family is that the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC) has been awarded pool time at City of Burlington facilities. I have two teenage daughters who started swimming with GHAC back in 2018 and used all the city pools for our various training. We made life long friends, my girls learned to swim through the programme and loved competing.

When GHAC didn't have access to city pools, it was a real challenge for us, like other GHAC Burlington families—early mornings practises especially in winter, long drives to pools that were no longer local and lost time in transit. We eventually reached out to BAD, the swim club that was awarded with local Burlington pool access to transfer my girls training with their club. No one returned our calls or emails. Sadly, my daughters found other sports we can do locally and left swimming.

One of my daughters suffers from severe asthma, as a mid distance track runner and basketball player she uses multiple puffers to keep her asthma under control. We noticed that when she swam competitively she didn't use the puffers as much. It was no brainer for us that swimming helped her with her lung health. GHAC has been inclusive and have allowed my daughters to swim with their club even though they both play high level sports (basketball/running track) and can still enjoy competing and practising with the team. While a supposed local club who was awarded the local pools didn't take the time to even answer our inquiry, we stayed with GHAC because the coaching, community, and inclusive environment are truly exceptional. It's not just about training; it's about helping kids develop confidence, resilience, and friendships through sport - my daughter who suffers from asthma is now a certified Life Guard/ swim instructor in local pool in Burlington! Glad we had GHAC to help her to do what she loves doing (swimming) while also enjoy playing other sports and helping future swimmers! We're so pleased to see this incredible program provided by GHAC returning to City of Burlington facilities. Now my kids can add more pool time! Thank you for recognizing how important it is to keep strong, inclusive sport programs like GHAC accessible to local families like myself.

Sincerely,

Luxmi Abell

Hi City of Burlington,

I wanted to add one more comment. I know that GHAC was very open to sharing pool time with BAD prior to the RFP process, but I'm light of them not wishing to pursue that option until they lost the bid seems to make the only fair thing to do now would be to honour the contract that GHAC was the successful candidate for and when the contract runs out, then remove the RFP process to move towards a shared model in the future.

Sincerely,

Diana Herrington  
Parent/Volunteer of GHAC

To whom ever it may concern,

Hello I am Selim Ghaly, I am a swimmer for GHAC and a social worker for them helping with the para athletes....

I am on the varsity swim team at York University currently in the offseason and GHAC has welcomed me to join the team with my brother who is already a swimmer for GHAC.

My family and I moved from Egypt a year ago And we currently live in Vaughan.

A lot of teams rejected my brother X because they don't have para programs

GHAC was the only club that accepted him and helped him improve and now they are helping me improve as well. We have to take the 407 everyday from Vaughan to Hamilton to get to practice. So having pool space in Burlington will make a huge difference for us because it is much closer.

Thanks very much for reading this email and have a good day.

Regards,  
Selim Ghaly

Respected city rep/staff.

This email is in view of the ongoing dispute regarding city pool time allocation process between the incumbent (Burlington Aquatic Devilrays/BAD) and GHAC and my position on the matter as a city of Burlington resident.

I just wanted to take time out and note that my daughter, was previously a competitive swimmer at BAD till we decided to switch clubs and moved to GHAC for the 2024-25 swim season.

Being a Burlington resident the move was indeed a difficult step for us as working parents, considering we moved out of familiar surroundings and the comfort of local pool access vs. a new set up and the gruelling ask of driving my daughter 5-6 days a week to the Hamilton/McMaster based GHAC.

However, the downside of this move was more than compensated by the improved focus and attention provided by GHAC coaches, the congenial and encouraging environment at GHAC. The level of coach intervention and support provided at GHAC has been miles better than what my daughter experienced previously.

GHAC receiving Burlington City pool access for the upcoming season is indeed a positive development as per me as it makes my daughter's swim journey more accessible and opens up/makes the swim club environment more competitive.

Regards,

Dear City of Burlington Clerks, Mayor Meed Ward, and Councillor Galbraith:

I am pleased that The City of Burlington has chosen the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club as their competitive swimming partner. As a former BAD family now swimming for GHAC, we look forward to swimming in Burlington, once again !!

The club we left one year ago has lost much of the top talent it had at that time. There are many other Burlington families who also felt the need to seek better coaching, leadership and better club management at the swim clubs adjacent to Burlington, such as the Milton Marlins, OAK (Oakville) or E-Swim (Etobicoke), the Hamilton Aquatic Club, Brant (Brantford), as well as the Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Club (GHAC). While many families live in Burlington and swim competitively elsewhere, most are not directly effected by this current RFP controversy, and their voices are likely not represented, despite their long drives to distant pools, to further their swimmers' ambitions.

Recent mass resignations from BAD, since the rejection of their RFP application, indicate that most of BAD's remaining top swimming talent are now looking for alternative clubs, and new coaches to swim with. This most recent rift within BAD means they are now unable to run swim meets, or contribute to the greater Swim Ontario community. BAD has lost the minimum required qualified volunteers it needs to organize and run swim meets. If BAD survives as an organization, they would be dependent on adjacent swim clubs to provide opportunities for athletes to record official times, under Swim Ontario regulations. This will significantly impact BAD's revenue, and their ability to offer cost-effective services for their members. It seems unlikely that BAD is currently able to use the pool time they are fighting so hard for.

With GHAC now managing competitive swimming at Burlington's facilities, many of Burlington's competitive swim families will likely choose to conveniently swim in Burlington's facilities once again. The City's decision to partner with GHAC will certainly benefit Burlington's fractured competitive swimming community, by bringing our athletes together again, at home. I also look forward to more cooperation and good sportsmanship among regional swim clubs going forward. I feel that GHAC, and the other regional clubs, provide excellent guidance, leadership, and opportunities for young athletes.

Burlington's decision to grant the competitive pool time contract to GHAC will certainly benefit Burlington swimmers and Burlington families, as well as the greater competitive swimming community governed by Swim Ontario. I would like to congratulate Burlington for making a very progressive decision.

Sincerely,

Richard Hodgson, Ward 1 resident.