



February 15, 2022

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Hamilton Aquatic Club
PO Box 33568
Hamilton, ON
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Dear Hamilton City Council,

On behalf of the Hamilton Aquatic Club Board of Directors and all of our members, we are writing you today, to advocate for youth programming in Hamilton. At a time when we know there has been a huge impact on youth physical, mental and social well being, we implore the City of Hamilton to stop reducing our allocated pool time and to avoid the lengthy delays in allowing our youth to return to sports. **It is time to start prioritizing our kids!**

The Hamilton Aquatic Club relies on City of Hamilton facilities to operate. The pandemic has impacted child and youth physical and mental health disproportionately. Our goal is to advocate for the youth in our communities by providing tangible information that we hope will influence and encourage a youth centered focus for future decision making. Please see points below regarding this rationale.

- By providing training opportunities within the City of Hamilton we would be better able to support the families in our communities
- Being accessible, due to HAC having to move training outside of Hamilton, many of our youth have been excluded as they don't have transportation to areas outside of our public transit system.
- Sustaining our membership, due to long delays with the re-opening of pools in the City of Hamilton (while pools in neighbouring municipalities have already re-opened) we have had several youth drop out of the program. This impacts HAC financially, but the greatest impact is on the youth who are no longer participating in sports or at the very least, swimming
- Capacity building and sustainability (again) our youngest of swimmers, those who help build the club over time, the HAC Swim School has not been able to run due to limited availability of City pools. We have had several young swimmers stop swimming all together or move to other organizations (some to other local clubs) that are offering training in private pools.
- Supporting our economy via rental fees rather than spending local money in other municipalities. This is all feeds back into a variety of ways in which our club would like to support the local community but are being pushed out to facilities in other municipalities.
- Changing the available pool time in the middle of the season is not respectful of our committed swim families, especially those with multiple children who are in multiple sports. Our families are already juggling complicated schedules and changing our pool time mid-season may force families to cancel due to schedule conflicts.

The sport of swimming and the dedication to sport has many positive impacts on the lives of our children. Our swimmers are engaged with their peers in a positive environment, they are led by positive adult role models, are learning new skills, setting, and achieving goals and are active participants in our community. HAC brings people together from across the city all centered around a positive commonality, to support our youth as they strive to achieve their goals.

As a youth organization, we are doing everything that we can to support our kids. Our swim families have come together to support each other to help ensure our kids can get to practice at these out-of-town facilities. As a membership we are supporting our families that have loved ones working frontline to keep our city safe. Keeping our swimmers engaged and in the pool is the core to this club yet we are seeing people leave because of the limitations noted above.



Our ask is simple, that the City of Hamilton be aware of the bigger implications of extended closures and reduction in rental time and the important role that organized youth sports plan in our children's lives. We wish to work with the City of Hamilton to advocate for positive changes that benefit all our citizens, especially our youth.

We ask that we come together, to think outside the box to find better solutions for the path forward. Our main goal is to see our youth prosper and engage in something they are truly passionate about. **We want to ensure every child has an opportunity to be active and healthy, especially in times where youth physical health, mental health and social well being have been compromised.**

HAC feels that it is time to revisit the vision of the City of Hamilton 'To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully', and we believe that our organization plays a role in delivering on this promise.

"As a primary care physician and emergency physician who has worked with youth throughout Hamilton over the last 15 years and as a mother of 3 young children who have spent more time out of school, away from extracurricular activities and out of pools, arenas than any other province, I cannot stress enough the physical, mental and social benefits of the HAC swimming program for my own children and the children I look after in my practice. Hamilton's youth has been disproportionately affected by significant lock downs over the course of this pandemic and the need to get back to sport and it's many well documented benefits has never been more acute"

Dr Barbora Pek MD CCFP(EM)
Family and Emergency Physician
Hamilton

"We know from the experience of school closures just how critical social interaction, physical fitness and education contribute to the well being of our children. Kids have borne the brunt of our pandemic response and with the successful reopening of schools in January we all see how important schools are to our kids. It's critical that we prioritize our kids to improve their physical and social well being.

As a paediatric oncologist we know how valuable physical activity and socialization are for children's well being. We must urgently prioritize our kids getting back to recreational and competitive athletics. We know every day of school is valuable. So too is every day in a competitive athletic program. I would employ you to urgently reinstate all HAC swim periods."

Dr Jeffrey Greenspoon
Pediatric Radiation Oncology
Juravinski Cancer Centre

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Did you know?

- HAC (Hamilton Aquatic Club) is the 2nd oldest swim club in all of Canada!
- HAC is a non-for-profit (not-for-profit or non-profit) organization. The sole purpose of this club is to provide every swimmer with an opportunity to achieve their personal best.
- Our swimmers represent the City of Hamilton at different levels of competition within the province and beyond. Each swimmer wears the **Hamilton** Aquatic Club name proudly!!
- HAC produced our very own hometown Olympian, Joanne Malar.
- HAC offers the Jimmy Thompson Swimmer Participation Program that provides youth with a no cost, barrier free swimming and fitness program. The goal of the program is to introduce participants to swimming, while also improving their fitness and self esteem. Every child in Hamilton should have the opportunity to learn and swim and HAC helps to provide this opportunity.
- HAC swimmers participate in the yearly CANUSA games. Forty HAC swimmers participate annually and represent Hamilton at these International Games.
- Swimming is a seasonal sport and has both a short course season (September – January) and a long course season (February – June).
- Swimming is not just about laps it is more than that, it is about building life-long friendships, valuable skill sets and creating confident, positive youth.
- Prior to the pandemic the Hamilton Aquatic Club had sixty-nine swimmers representing our club and our city at provincial level meets.
- During our short 2021 Fall Season HAC was able to ~~two~~ host an in-house meet at which one hundred and fifty swimmers were able to participate and set new personal bests.
 - Unfortunately, we were forced to host this "home" meet at a **facility outside of the City of Hamilton** as we were not able to secure appropriate pool time within the city.
 - HAC would like to run all of our 'home' meets within the city. HAC swimmers proudly wear the Hamilton name and would like ~~to~~ the opportunity to race at home.