

From: "Let's Make Waves" [info@letsmakewaves.ca]

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To: mayor_ford@toronto.ca

Dear Mayor Ford,

Our non-partisan city wide group, Let's Make Waves, was left both confused and surprised when we learned that you want to cease programming at 7 of the 33 TDSB pools the City currently permits. Surely there must be some mistake, because you have made a good name for yourself by having good common sense, strong business acumen, and sensible cost cutting strategies. You are a man of integrity and a man of your word. Ceasing programming at these TDSB pools without talking to Torontonians surely is in conflict with these values.

As you know, the City of Toronto uses the TDSB pools for 45% of its Aquatics Programs, which makes perfect common sense, and is in keeping with the original intent of building pools in TDSB schools to serve Toronto taxpayers and their families. After all, these TDSB pools are in the Toronto's core neighborhoods, where there are no nearby community centers. It makes good sense to work together with the TDSB to leverage this existing resource. You don't need to build new pools, and children will learn not to drown – an important consideration when the City is flanked by one of the Great Lakes.

As a businessman, you are in the habit of consulting your Board of Directors and basing your decisions on rigorous and accurate analysis. As mayor, you consult your Council, and consult the analysis of the staff reports. In this case, we're not convinced their analysis was done with the thoroughness necessary for making a sound decision.

Recall that the TDSB called in David Crombie (former mayor, head of Toronto Lands Corp., and the Aquatics Working Group) to spearhead an assessment of 39 pools at risk for closure. With hired professional engineers, and a small army of AWG volunteers, the AWG report reviewed, in part:

1. The overall condition of each pool
2. The actual cost to run the pool
3. The revenue of each pool from permitting
4. Feasibility of permitting to other groups for additional revenue
5. Community access to this resource

It took a year, but in that year the community was well engaged in the process and accepted without debate, that 7 of the 39 pools should be closed. In addition, over the course of that year for the 32 pools that remained open, permit revenues have grown from \$300,000 a year to over \$1,000,000. It was mostly a matter of communicating to the public that this resource was available to rent...

Has your staff done a full and proper business assessment? Was this in consult with the AWG? Was the community involved? Are there ways to manage these aquatics resources differently instead of suddenly "pulling the plug" on them?

Finally, we know you are a man of your word. At the August 2010 Council Meeting in one of your last acts as Councillor, you seconded a motion put forth by Councilor Stintz (MM52.5) which embraced this bold vision:

“the City needs to commit to full participation in the work of the Toronto Lands Corporation’s Pools Governance Sub-Committee and Aquatics Working Group so that all residents of Toronto can enjoy access to training in water safety and aquatics recreation opportunities.”

On reading this, it appears to us that the budget proposal to not continue use in the 7 pools in question, and to recommend ceasing permitting in these pools without the ongoing communication with the TDSB/AWG, feels in conflict with this motion. Can you help us to understand if we should think differently?

Please help us to understand your position, Mayor Ford. We are trying desperately to hold onto the idea that you are not another David Miller, that you are not playing a game of brinksmanship saying it is the school board’s responsibility alone to teach our kids to swim.. We are really, really trying.

Please show us through your actions that you have the common sense, business acumen, and personal integrity to work in partnership with the TDSB to properly manage these important community resources moving forward, and consider the idea that the 7 pools should be properly re-evaluated for future City and community programming.

Let’s Make Waves

Let’s Make Waves is a volunteer, non-partisan coalition of parents, students, concerned citizens, and members of not-for-profit sports organizations from across the city of Toronto united by a common interest to advocate for swimming pools in Toronto schools and for aquatic recreation for all residents of Toronto.

Visit us at www.letsmakewaves.ca

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