



## News Release

Jan. 27, 2021

### Local municipalities and Conservation Halton launch joint winter water safety campaign

With the arrival of colder temperatures, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, the Town of Oakville and Conservation Halton are launching a joint winter water safety campaign to educate residents about the dangers associated with waterways this time of year.

Areas with frozen lakes, ponds, channels and reservoirs can be beautiful places to visit during the winter months but all too often many people risk their lives by venturing onto frozen water. As many people are exploring alternate ways to stay active outdoors, the risks for water-related accidents are bound to increase.

While temperatures have declined since November's unseasonably warm days, we are experiencing frequent freeze-thaw cycles, resulting in the melting of accumulated snow and ice cover. This runoff can create hazardous conditions near all waterways, by contributing to higher water levels and increased velocities in local watercourses. As well, slippery and unstable streambanks and extremely cold water temperatures can also lead to very hazardous and dangerous conditions close to any body of water.

Recreation of any kind is not permitted on stormwater management ponds. Stormwater management ponds are designed to retain water runoff and slowly release it back into receiving water courses. Factors such as continuously flowing water, fluctuating temperatures, and runoff pollutants like road salt, make these bodies of water (frozen or open water) especially unpredictable and subject to rapid change. Although they may look inviting, they are not safe and should be avoided.

Practice water safety and stay safe this winter by remembering the following tips:

- Keep family members and pets away from all bodies of water
- Don't follow pets or people on the ice or attempt to rescue - call 911 for assistance
- Avoid recreational activities in or around waterways and check with your local municipality for alternative outdoor skating opportunities

## Quotes:

“Ice on stormwater ponds and in waterways can be very deceiving. It may look fun and inviting, but the reality is we don’t know how safe they are, especially our stormwater ponds. Stormwater ponds are not monitored for ice thickness and have year-round waterflow, which weakens and thins the ice. While they may look safe, they are not. There are plenty of other great outdoor activities to get your exercise and enjoy your time outside. Please stay off the ice and away from waterways.”

- Karen Roche, Fire Chief, Burlington Fire Department

“I ask parents and their children to please stay away from stormwater management ponds. These bodies of water are not intended for recreational use and as inviting as they look, these surfaces are not safe with ice quality and water levels subject to rapid and unpredictable change.”

- Bruce Morrison, Acting Fire Chief, Halton Hills Fire Department

“We know that people are looking for activities to do during the stay-at-home order, but for your safety, please stay away from all bodies of water. Ice conditions can change quickly and without warning creating extreme, hidden hazards.”

- Peter Gatto, Fire Chief, Milton Fire Department

“Many factors, including air temperature, road runoff, sun, wind, snow and overall thickness can cause ice to weaken and become very dangerous to walk, skate or play on. The strength of ice can’t be judged simply by its appearance or the temperature outside. At this time of year, parents are reminded to educate children about ice safety.”

- Paul Boissonneault, Fire Chief, Oakville Fire Department

“Conservation Halton operates and maintains significant flood control infrastructure in support of public safety, both in our parks and out in the community. Reservoirs and flood channels are increasingly dangerous during the winter months as cold water and unstable ice amplifies existing dangers. With many of us exploring nature this winter during the ongoing pandemic, please be cautious around water and ice, and keep a safe distance away from the edge of water.”

- Glenn Farmer, Manager Flood Forecasting and Operations, Conservation Halton

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