

September 6, 2022

Elana Arthurs
Chief Administrative Officer
Township of Douro-Dummer
894 South Street, P.O. Box 92
Warsaw, ON K0L 3A0

Delivered via email to: elanaa@dourodummer.on.ca

Dear Ms. Arthurs,

RE: Request to reconsider the status of Back Dam Park, 902 Rock Road, Warsaw, ON as a “public beach”

Peterborough Public Health (PPH) has been sampling the waterfront at Back Dam Park since the summer of 2017. According to the [Operational Approaches for Recreational Water Guideline, 2018](#), the definition of a “public beach” is: *any public bathing area owned/operated by a municipality to which the general public has access, and where there is reason to believe that there is recreational use of the water (e.g., beach signage, sectioned off swimming area, water safety/rescue equipment, lifeguard chairs, etc.), which may result in waterborne illness or injury as determined by the local medical officer of health.*

Over the last five years, PPH recreational water staff have identified concerns with Back Dam being considered a true public beach. These concerns are primarily about the safety hazards at the beach due to the presence of algae and rocks, slippery conditions, swamp-like vegetation, and a high presence of waterfowl. Observations recorded by staff indicate that the recreational use of the water (i.e., the bather load) is typically nil and if anyone is observed to be in the water, they are usually walking on the shallow, rocky part of the dam area and not swimming in the area that is currently sampled as the “beach”.

This year, I received similar concerns from staff, prompting me to attend the beach on July 21, 2022. Back Dam is a beautiful park and picnic area, however, continuing to treat this waterfront as a public beach is accompanied with risk and safety concerns:

- 1) PPH is unable to consistently sample the water according to the Ministry of Health sampling protocol due to sediment, shallow water and unsafe conditions.
- 2) The rocks are significantly covered in algae, creating slippery and unsafe conditions for sampling and swimming (high risk of injury due to slip and fall).
- 3) There is a significant presence of lily pads, cattails, and waterfowl. These conditions are not esthetically pleasing for swimming purposes and the presence of waterfowl increases the risk of elevated *E. coli* levels.

The last set of water samples at Back Dam Park was collected on July 21, 2022. Those samples caused the beach to be posted as unsafe for swimming due to elevated *E. coli* levels. Resampling has not occurred due to a risk of occupational injury.

PPH is respectfully requesting that the Township of Douro-Dummer reconsider the classification of Back Dam Park as a public beach. If this is agreeable, then PPH will remove the beach from our website and routine beach surveillance program, and will no longer sample the waterfront. We would strongly encourage signage to be posted that discourages swimming and advises the public that the water quality of the beach is not routinely monitored, as well as some of the other potential risks (e.g., slippery rocks).

Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (705) 743-1000 ext. 351 or jingram@peterboroughpublichealth.ca.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Ingram", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julie Ingram, BSc, BASc, CPHI(C)
Manager, Environmental Health

cc: Dr. Thomas Piggott, Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health