

Consolidated List of Recommendations

Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

1. All municipalities in the Province of Ontario should pass pool enclosure municipal bylaws that mandate barrier safety requirements for new pools including in-ground, above-ground, portable, inflatable and hydro-massage pools, hot tubs and spas as well as decorative ponds such that when they are installed:

- they are surrounded by 4-sided fencing that completely encloses the pool area;
- the pool enclosure bylaw applies to all structures with a water depth of at least 0.6m (2 feet);
- they allow entry and exit through a self-closing and self-latching gate only;
- the 4-sided fencing be a minimum height of 1.22m (4 feet);
- the bylaw specifies that fence construction should inhibit climbing;
- the home should never open into a pool area.

2. All municipalities in the Province of Ontario should pass pool enclosure municipal bylaws that mandate retrofitting for existing pools as defined by 2015 to the standards as in recommendation #1 above.

The Government of Canada, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada

3. The Government of Canada, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada as a component of their health promotion, health protection and injury prevention mandate should;

- develop an evidence-based best practice for pool enclosure safety; and
- review the federal legislation passed in Australia, New Zealand and France for the purposes of determining whether

similar legislation could be proclaimed in Canada in all provinces and territories by the Government of Canada.

Lifesaving Society Canada, the Canadian Red Cross, Safe Communities Canada, Safe Kids Canada, SMARTRISK Canada, and Thinkfirst Canada

4. (a) Non-governmental organizations and agencies with expertise in water safety education and drowning prevention such as the Lifesaving Society, the Canadian Red Cross, Safe Communities Canada, Safe Kids Canada, SMARTRISK Canada, and Thinkfirst Canada should meet and develop collaborative public education campaigns with water safety messages detailing prevention strategies.

(b) The public education campaign should target parents and/or caregivers of infants, toddlers and school age children stressing that:

- parents must have *continuous visual contact* with direct supervision of their children when they are in water;
- parents must exercise direct supervision and be within arms length reach of their children when they are in water;
- parents should endeavour to take children to beaches and pools with certified lifeguards on duty;
- infants, toddlers and school aged children should be placed in life jackets before being allowed to enter any area in or around water;
- although swimming lessons are available for infants younger than 1 year of age, the earliest mastery of basic water locomotive skills does not occur until 4 years of age, irrespective of the age when lessons are started. Parents should be aware that even if their children have completed swimming lessons, they still require direct supervision;

- **ALL** children should be taught to swim; and
 - parents should develop an action plan in advance should their child develop problems during their swimming adventure
- (c) **The public education campaign should target non-swimming parents of infants, toddlers and school age children stressing the importance that they themselves learn basic water safety skills in order to effectively respond and react in a time of crisis. Furthermore, they should be educated on how to conduct themselves around water to maintain safety for themselves and others.**
- (d) **The public education campaign should also target men aged 15-64 stressing:**
- if they don't know how to swim, they should learn how to swim;
 - if they drink alcohol, they should not swim or operate a pleasure craft;
 - that life jackets or personal floatation devices should be worn at all times on all pleasure craft less than 6 metres in length when boating;
 - that special attention should be paid to posted warnings regarding water safety and conditions; and
 - that they should always swim with a partner that knows how to swim.

The Ministry of Natural Resources

5. **The Ministry of Natural Resources should undertake a review of Provincial Parks that experienced drowning deaths identifying potential root causes for the deaths, and develop evidence-based strategies to prevent further occurrences. Specifically, the deaths that occurred at Rock Point Provincial Park should be reviewed. Once the process is in place to review these deaths, this exercise should be conducted annually for all Provincial Parks. Near-drowning incidents should be tracked and recorded in this annual review.**

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario

6. (a) **The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks, municipalities operating public beaches and operators of Class A or Class B recreational camps with public swimming areas, and privately owned parks and beaches should ensure that;**
- lifeguards be present at high volume public beaches (e.g. Wasaga, Sandbanks and Rock Point) with clear demarcation defining the swimming area under the surveillance of the lifeguard;
 - clear signage identifies the risk of challenging water conditions such as rough water and waves, strong currents, undertows and off-shore winds;
 - the water/swimming conditions of the day should be provided to all patrons registering to visit the park on that given day;
 - high risk swimming areas that should be avoided are clearly marked;
 - a series of "no-swim" beaches are defined to prohibit swimming in dangerous swimming environments;
 - there is a lifejacket loaner program for children <10 years of age, adult non-swimmers, and boaters;
 - rescue equipment such as ropes and ring buoys are readily available should rescue attempts be necessary and should be accompanied with the necessary brief pictorial instructions.
- (b) **That clear signage is posted depicting safety measures including;**
- how to swim out of a rip current, and how to help someone who is caught in a rip current, should they exist;
 - how to utilize safety equipment to effect a rescue; and
 - how to communicate to park staff and emergency medical services (EMS) in the event of a drowning or near-drowning

7. The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks, municipalities operating public beaches and operators of Class A or Class B recreational camps with public swimming areas that employ lifeguards should implement the *International Beach Flag System*:



Red flags with a no swimming symbol indicate that the water is closed to the public.



Red flags without a symbol indicate a high hazard from surf and/or currents.



Yellow flags indicate a medium hazard from moderate surf and/or currents.



Green flags indicate a low hazard with calm conditions. Beachgoers should still exercise caution.



Purple flags indicate a hazard from dangerous marine life. These flags are used in conjunction with another coloured flag indicating the current surf/current conditions.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

8. a) The *Health Protection and Promotion Act R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 565 Public Pools* should be amended to require the following admission and tracking standard for recreational non-instructional swimming in public pools to improve surveillance of the activities of young children in order to prevent drowning.

- The child or youth is required to take a facility swim test.
- Staff should be trained in the application of this standard and should communicate this to the public.
- Direct supervision means "within arms length".
- This standard should be posted at the pool reception area and on the pool deck.
- Owner/operators must develop a procedure by which the admission standards can be tracked and identified on the bathers to which the standard is applied (i.e. coloured bracelets).

Tracking Standard for Recreational Non-Instructional Swimming of Children in Public Pools

General Admission

Age (years)	Information	Admission Requirements	Adult: Child Ratio
5 and under	Parents must be within arms reach at all times	Always accompanied (parent/guardian 16+)	1:2 Must wear lifejackets
6 – 7	Parents must be within arms reach at all times	Always accompanied (parent/guardian 16+)	1:4 No lifejacket required
			1:6 Must wear lifejackets
8 – 10	Did not pass facility swimming test	Always accompanied (parent/guardian 16+)	1:4 No lifejacket required
			1:8 Must wear lifejackets
8 – 10	Successfully completed facility swim test	No adult supervision required	N/A

Groups and Camps of 10 or More Participants

Age (years)	Information	Admission Requirements	Adult: Child Ratio
5 and under	Supervisor must be actively participating within arms reach at all times	Always accompanied	1:2 Must wear lifejackets
6 – 7	Supervisor must be actively participating within arms reach at all times	Always accompanied	1:4 No lifejacket required
			1:6 Must wear lifejackets
8 – 10	Did not pass facility swim test	Always accompanied	1:4 No lifejacket required
			1:8 Must wear lifejackets
8 – 10	Successfully completed facility swim test	Always accompanied	1:10
11 – 15	N/A	Always accompanied	1:15

Each ratio indicates the maximum number of children that one responsible person (aged 16 or older) is able to supervise. Parent/guardian must be in proper bathing attire, in the water, actively participating within arms reach at all times. High-risk participants must be in a ratio of 1:1. High-risk participants are defined as those who have a condition or illness that may put them at risk in an aquatic environment (e.g. frequent seizures, fainting conditions, etc) and those who are unable to control behaviour or impulses and require direct supervision.

8. (b) *The Health Protection and Promotion Act R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 565 Public Pools* should be amended to require all operators of public pools where lifeguards or instructors are not present to:

- post signage indicating the high risk associated with being a non-swimmer in a pool;
- require non-swimmers to utilize lifejackets unless receiving direct swimming instruction from an instructor;
- provide lifejackets for non-swimmers; and
- make it a requirement that non-swimmers utilizing the pool area must swim with a partner/buddy who is a swimmer.

The Government of Canada, Transport Canada

9. The Government of Canada, Transport Canada should amend the *Canada Shipping Act, Small Vessel Regulation* to require all pleasure craft operators and passengers to continuously wear life jackets or personal floatation devices when on board vessels (both powered and unpowered) less than 6 metres in length.

The Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

10. (a) The Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care as well as all Boards of Health in Ontario, through their Public Health Units, as a component of their mandate with respect to health promotion, health protection and injury prevention should begin an educational program to prevent drowning in Ontario, specifically targeting men ages 15 to 64.

(b) As drowning is largely preventable, consideration should be given to running educational warnings through media outlets including social media at peak times for water recreation such as July and August when the ambient temperature is greater than 21 °C. These “*drowning alerts*” could be modelled after cold weather alerts and heat alerts which are currently utilized by Public Health Units.

(c) Another suggested warning would target high risk behaviours by high risk populations. Males between the ages of 15-64 could benefit from education displaying information posters which discuss the hazards of combining alcohol with boating and swimming. These posters could be developed and provided by Public Health Units and displayed conspicuously in liquor stores, beer stores and marinas.

The Ministry of Education

11. The Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education should make learning to swim and water safety knowledge a component of the educational curriculum for all children as it is an essential element of building personal safety and injury prevention skills.

12. The Province of Ontario, Ministry of Education should ensure that as many school boards as possible in the province:

- set minimum standards for basic swimming skills and work with expert aquatic agencies to develop a minimum standard to meet their curriculum;
- utilize an instructional program which provides both in-water and in-classroom education for grade 3 students;
- develop advanced programs for children so that they can swim and are knowledgeable about water safety skills before they graduate from elementary school; and
- prioritize this initiative in geographical regions and school boards where there are high numbers of Aboriginal and new Canadian children.

All parties to whom recommendations have been directed will be asked to respond to the Office of the Chief Coroner within one calendar year after the date of issue of the report.