

**To:** Representatives on the Planning Committee of the City of Hamilton, Ontario

**Re:** PHTCC Recommendations on Drowning Prevention – Residential Swimming Pool Barriers

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Introduction:* The Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada recognizes the importance of creating a safe backyard pool and spa environment for all families. We have a long history of working with water safety and drowning prevention organizations, local Boards of Health, and provincial ministries to promote safety in and around pools, spas and water features.

*Our objectives:*

- Ensure that all municipalities have Swimming Pool Fence By-laws in place;
- Promote a layered approach to safety in and around pools and spas;
- Work with communities to strengthen existing By-laws;
- Educate homeowners on key elements of drowning prevention and water safety;
- Foster public awareness of the importance of adult supervision;
- Develop and implement pool safety educational programs in co-operation with municipal health authorities across the country.

### **The Issues:**

1) Ensure Municipal By-laws are in Place: Some communities in Canada have yet to enact swimming pool barrier By-laws. The PHTCC recommends instituting regulations consistent with the publication, “*A Model Residential Pool Enclosure By-law for Canadian Municipalities*”. Some communities have By-laws that are antiquated and are in need of revision. By-laws must be kept up to date in keeping with modern technologies and the existing body of knowledge available on the subjects of drowning prevention and water safety.

2) Creating a Safe Backyard for Young Children: Intuitively, one might consider the installation of an isolation fence completely surrounding a swimming pool as the ultimate safeguard to prevent toddlers from accessing the water. In reality, the most effective solution to prevent drownings has proven to be the combination of: i) the institution of local by-laws, ii) the promotion of a layered approach to safety (i.e., a series of deterrents), and iii) the establishment of educational programs. In the absence of active enforcement, owner buy-in is essential to any success. Otherwise an imposed solitary solution has the potential to fail.

### **Recommendations:**

We strongly encourage the City of Hamilton to amend its existing swimming pool enclosure By-law to incorporate elements of “*A Model Residential Pool Enclosure By-law for Canadian Municipalities*”. Ideally it will include the following provisions:

- 1) All pools, old and new, should be required to have fencing on all three sides, and a gate that is self-closing, self-latching, and locked when the pool is not in use.
- 2) Families with children of six (6) years of age or less should be required to select and install one or more of the recommended physical barrier options and deploy supplementary safeguards to assure additional layers of protection.

We also recommend the establishment of an educational program that addresses water safety.

**PHTCC**