



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	March 21, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Public Beach Signage (BOH22004) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Richard MacDonald (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5818
SUBMITTED BY:	Kevin McDonald Director, Healthy Environments Division Public Health Services
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable.

INFORMATION

The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) specify the public health programs and services local Boards of Health must deliver. Program and topic-specific protocols under the OPHS further define the minimum responsibilities every Board of Health in Ontario is accountable to provide. To assist in the prevention and reduction of water-borne illness and injury related to recreational water use at a public beach, Boards of Health are directed by the Recreational Water Protocol (2019) and the Operational Approaches for Recreational Water Guideline (2018). Both documents guide the delivery of the local Beach Water Quality Monitoring Program in Hamilton. The seven monitored beaches in Hamilton are Beach Boulevard, Van Wagner's and Confederation Park Beaches along Lake Ontario; Binbrook, Christie and Valens Conservation Area beaches, and Pier 4 Park Beach in Hamilton Harbour.

The Recreational Beach Water Protocol (2019) requires Public Health Services staff conduct weekly routine beach water quality monitor of all public beaches. Beach water samples with a geometric mean concentration ≤ 200 E. coli per 100 mL for E.coli bacteria and/or a single-sample maximum concentration ≤ 400 E. coli / 100 mL is considered unsafe for swimming. Samples above the thresholds are posted immediately

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online and on-site signage is posted or “flipped” by stakeholders from “Safe for Swimming” to “Unsafe for Swimming” as directed by Public Health Services staff. On-site signage remains in place until water resample results are below the thresholds then are “flipped” back to “Safe for Swimming”. These signs direct the public to the City of Hamilton website www.hamilton.ca/beaches or Safe Water Hotline at (905) 546-2189 regarding current water quality status (see Appendix “A” to Report BOH22004: Current Beach Sign).

It has been identified by Public Health Services staff, as well as internal and external stakeholders, that changing or “flipping” on-site signs is not required under the Protocol and impacts internal/external staff resources and creates an unfavourable image of City of Hamilton public beaches. Current on-site signage lacks information regarding possible beach conditions that can cause bacteria levels to rise between weekly routine water samples. There are also no surrounding Public Health Units in Central West Ontario that “flip” signs from “Safe” to “Unsafe” for swimming. Surrounding Public Health Units post permanent signage at public beaches informing the public of conditions that can increase bacteria levels and direct the public to their websites for up-to-date beach status information.

Public Health Services has redesigned on-site signage (see Appendix “B” to Report BOH22004: Redesigned Permanent Beach Sign) that will include information regarding possible beach conditions that can cause bacteria levels to rise between weekly routine water samples, direct the public to the City of Hamilton website and/or Safe Water Hotline and align with neighbouring health unit permanent signs for consistent messaging to the public (see Appendix “C” to Report BOH22004: Example Niagara Permanent Beach Sign).

The redesigned permanent beach sign will be installed at all seven Public Health Services monitored beaches replacing twenty-eight signs in total prior to the 2022 beach monitoring season and communicate this operational change to the public and internal/external stakeholders via a comprehensive communications plan.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

- Appendix “A” to Report BOH22004: Current Beach Signage
- Appendix “B” to Report BOH22004: Redesigned Permanent Beach Sign
- Appendix “C” to Report BOH22004: Example Niagara Permanent Beach Sign