

Wednesday, June 13, 2007

For Immediate Release

York Region begins beach sampling program

NEWMARKET – During the hot weather, beaches provide a fun way to cool off and spend time with family and friends. York Region Health Services monitors water quality at York Region's public bathing beaches during the summer months to ensure that the water quality is safe for swimming. The 2007 York Region Beach Sampling Program officially begins on Wednesday, June 13th.

From June to the end of August, a minimum of five water samples are collected and tested weekly from each of the beaches listed below:

Town of Georgina (Lake Simcoe beaches)

Claredon Beach
Balfour Beach
De La Salle Beach
Franklin Beach
Holmes Point
Island Grove
Jackson's Point
Keswick Beach
North Gwillimbury Park
Glenwoods Beach
Peninsula Motel Beach
Port Bolster Beach
Willow Beach
Willow Wharf Dock

Town Of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Cedar Beach, Musselman's Lake
Shadow Lake

Township of King

Recreation Island, Seneca College

Town of Richmond Hill

Sunset Beach, Lake Wilcox

York Region also posts signs at each of the beaches advising the public whether it is safe and unsafe to swim. Below are pictures of and explanations for the types of signs:



This sign denotes that the water is **safe for swimming**, unless there has been a heavy rainfall at the beach site within the past 48 hours.

If there has been heavy rainfall during this time, York Region Health Services recommends that you do not go into the water.

Bacterial levels including *E.coli* (a dangerous bacteria) tend to be higher after a heavy rainfall.



This sign denotes that the level of bacteria in the water is high enough to cause illness and that the water is **unsafe for swimming**.

High levels of bacteria can cause skin, ear, eye, nose and throat infections, as well as stomach disorders.

York Region advises that you do not go into the water when you see this sign.



This sign denotes that the beach is **closed** for blue-green algae bloom. Beaches can also be closed when there are indications of hazardous or infectious materials present in the water.

When the water is once again safe for swimming, the beach will be re-opened.

York Region advises that you do not go in the water when you see this sign.

There are many factors that contribute to water pollution at our beaches, including:

- Seasonal and storm surface run-off into rivers and lakes
- Agriculture manure and feedlot run-off
- Domestic pet waste run-off
- Sewer overflows and malfunctioning private sewage disposal systems
- Large population of waterfowl
- Warm water temperatures
- Boating waste

Below is a list of tips to help keep local beaches open and safe for swimming:

- If you own a pet, please observe local "stoop and scoop" by-laws and remove their waste from city streets, public parks and private property
- Avoid attracting animals or birds to beaches by feeding them
- If you are planning an addition to your home, contact your local building department to ensure that plumbing fixtures are properly connected to municipal sanitary sewer pipes or your private sewage disposal system
- In agricultural communities, fence livestock away from streams and provide them with alternate water sources
- Ensure that run-off from feedlots and manure piles is properly maintained
- Upgrade and keep in good working order your private sewage disposal system
- Practice pollution-free boating by disposing of human wastes hygienically
- Avoid the water if you have an infection or open wound

Several private beach associations monitor their own beach water quality. York Region Health Services welcomes the opportunity to assist beach associations with the set-up of water sampling programs. To find out if your favourite beach is safe for swimming or for more information about the Beach Sampling Program contact York Region Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

- 30 -

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