

# Kelso water 'excellent'

By JASON MISNER  
The Champion

Kelso Conservation Area beach continued its years-long streak of not losing any valuable swimming days, according to a beach sampling report from the Halton Region Health Department.

A water quality report, ratified at Wednesday's regional council meeting, showed Kelso stood head and shoulders above the seven beaches the Region monitors.

Kelso, which has shown to consistently be the safest place to swim since 1997, has had no waterfowl issue after it installed over-head netting six years ago to prevent birds from circling the beach. It also has no sewage outfall nearby and no linkage to Lake Ontario.

These factors have helped Kelso stay clean for a number of years. Since 1997, it has not lost any swimming days. Only seven days were lost in 1996.

"In 2003, the water quality in the Kelso reservoir continued to be excellent with no unsafe occurrences since 1996," stated Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal in the staff report.

Also, at the Oakville beaches, mostly used for recreational water activities like boating, water quality has been improving since 2001. Prior to that, since 1995, it had been permanently closed due to high levels of E. coli.

For example, Oakville's Coronation Beach East was closed for 11 days, a major improvement

from 2002 when the beach was closed for 49 days.

Coronation Park West in Oakville closed for 33 days, down from 35 days in 2002, while Bronte Beach Park closed for 32 days, down from 49 days in 2002.

Tony Amalfa, Halton's manager of environmental health, said it's difficult to pinpoint the reason for improvement. "I think a lot of it has to do with environmental factors, like rainfall and wave action, but I can't say for sure."

It's a different story for other beaches in Halton.

High levels of E. coli along the sandy shores of Burlington beaches has prompted the health department to partner with a federal government water research agency to find out what's happening.

Water quality along Beachway North and South has been worsening steadily since 1999, the staff report showed. During that year, the beaches were unsafe for swimming 14 days. In 2000, it jumped to 21 days, then 28 days in 2001, 35 days in 2002 and 42 days last summer.

"Burlington beaches have shown good results until 1999 compared to other Lake Ontario sampling points," stated Dr. Nosal. "There is no obvious factor for the increased poor results in the last three years."

As a result, health staff will be consulting with the Canadian Centre for Inland Waters (CCIW) this year to find out what's going on. The CCIW, based in

Burlington, is a research facility funded by Environment Canada which studies fresh water ecosystems.

In an earlier interview, Mr. Amalfa said the intent is to report back to the health and social services committee in the fall with an update on any potential findings and what possible measures might be needed to address the problem.

The presence of E. coli bacteria, found in the intestinal tract of warm-blooded animals, forces Halton's health department to close a beach until bacteria levels dissipate.

Excessive waterfowl waste at Boathouse Beach in Acton has caused the Town of Halton Hills to shut it down indefinitely.

Regional health staff found that it was unsafe for swimming 66 days last summer — the highest among the seven main beaches the Region monitors. That's up from 63 days in 2002 and from 42 days in 2001.

A major problem there is poop from waterfowl. Halton Hills has decided to close it indefinitely to swimmers and boaters. Regional health staff will monitor the water quality on a monthly basis, Mr. Amalfa said.

There is still the possibility boat launches may be re-started in the future. Old Beach in Halton Hills closed for 39 days, up from 28 days in 2002.

Jason Misner can be reached at [jmisner@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:jmisner@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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