



## Town of Huntsville Staff Report

**Meeting Date:** June 28, 2021

**To:** Council

**Report Number:** CS-2021-09

**Confidential:** No

**Author(s):** Cameron Labonte, Manager of Aquatics

**Subject:** Lifesaving Equipment at Town Swimming Areas

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### Report Highlights

The report outlines costs, liability and risk management considerations, drowning prevention information, maintenance, and replacement cost of lifesaving equipment addressing the deputation concerning a lifesaving ring buoy at Port Sydney beach.

### Recommendation

**That:** Staff be directed to purchase, install and maintain the appropriate lifesaving equipment with signage at the Port Sydney Beach and Hutcheson Beach locations as a Phase-One implementation;

**And Further That:** Any costs associated with the installation of the lifesaving equipment be taken from the Aquatics operating budget;

**And Further That:** Staff be directed to create and implement an Operation Plan to include waterfront access equipment and signage, and update and re-categorize all Town water access points;

**And Further That:** Staff be directed to report back to Committee with future recommended Phases of this project.

### Background

On May 26, 2021 at the General Committee meeting, as per resolution GC106-21, staff was directed to bring a report outlining the cost, legal and maintenance requirements to install lifesaving equipment at all Town owned water access locations including park, beaches and known swim areas.

### Discussion

#### Town of Huntsville Water Access locations Summary:

The Town of Huntsville is responsible for a number of locations that have access to waterfront. There are a total of approximately 40 Town-owned water access locations including parks, beaches and known swimming areas. These locations include:

- 2 larger attraction primary beaches: Port Sydney Beach, Hutcheson Beach
- 2 waterfronts accessed by docks
- 13 parks advertised as swimming locations on the Town of Huntsville website
- 18 other locations advertised on the Town Website that have access to water
- There are also a number of other informal locations that have access to waterfront that are not included currently but will be added and categorized to internal operations plans and on the Town website going forward.

All waterfront access points in the Town of Huntsville are unsupervised and do not have buoy lines, ring buoys and are not guarded, with the exception of the Port Sydney Beach which does have buoy lines. Staff have developed an operational guideline for maintenance and inspection of the lifesaving equipment (buoy lines) at that location. Additional waterfront operational plans need to be developed for any new installations of waterfront safety devices and equipment.

Providing lifesaving equipment to waterfront locations would be a new level of service.

### **Legislation:**

There is no Federal or Provincial legislation/law that requires a municipality to provide any lifesaving equipment at locations that have water access.

### **The Lifesaving Society (Canada's lifeguarding expert):**

The Society is a national, charitable organization working to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training program, Water Smart® which is a public education, drowning research, safety management services and lifesaving sport.

The Lifesaving Society provides the following guidance regarding water safety:

- Basic water safety skills are essential. Swimming pools, lakes and rivers offer year-round fun if they are enjoyed safely. But every year about 160 people drown in Ontario. Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death for children under five years old, and statistics show that children under 12, boaters, young men and seniors 65+ are at greatest risk.
- Drowning is fast and silent, but every drowning death is preventable with water safety knowledge and common sense.
- Important water safety tips for everyone:
  - Learn to swim
  - Always swim with a buddy
  - Children and non-swimmers should always be supervised around water
  - Wear a lifejacket whenever you are in a boat
  - Alcohol and water don't mix: don't drink and swim, don't drink and drive your boat

The Town of Huntsville is a strong advocate for water safety and has continued to offer and promote ways to learn to swim, for both children and adults. Lessons are offered year-round at the Centennial Pool and in summer months at the Port Sydney Beach and Hutcheson Beach.

### **Liability and Insurance Advice:**

- Should the Town set a safety practice in place, it needs to be continued and should not be discontinued to reduce the risk of legal exposure. If Council decides to implement lifesaving equipment this year, the continuance of this practice should be maintained.
- It is recommended the The Town of Huntsville use the guidance of the Lifesaving Society's Ontario Waterfront Safety Standards in regards to the Operations Plan, to develop best practices and guidelines.
- Signage describing how to use the equipment in the event of emergency and what the emergency procedures are must be provided at the installation site. i.e.: call 911, cover the person with a blanket/towel until help arrives, the location where help should be sent etc.

### **Operations Plan:**

A Waterfront Safety Operations Plan is required to frequently check the equipment for vandalism, damage and that it remains on site.

- Qualified staff (Aquatics Manager) will check device at beginning of the season (May Long weekend, July 1st, and August 1st) and will provide visual inspection criteria for parks staff.
- Parks maintenance staff will do a visual inspection to ensure equipment is still in place and vandalism hasn't occurred when visiting these locations as part of their regular operations plan. Parks maintenance staff will report the need for replacements or maintenance.
- The Life saving devices will be in place from the long weekend of May to the long weekend in October.
- It is recommended that the general public not attempt to perform cold water or fast moving rescues therefore the equipment will not be in place from late October to early May.

### **Theft or Damage:**

- Theft and/or mischief is a Criminal matter under the criminal code of Canada enforced by police officers, not by-law.
- Vandal Proof Holder can be purchased as part of the equipment.

### **Phased-in Approach:**

- As lifesaving equipment would be a new level of service being offered by the Town of Huntsville, it is being recommended that a phased-in approach be utilized.
- In the absence of a policy and operations plan regarding the implementation of lifesaving devices at Town of Huntsville waterfront access properties, staff are recommending that lifesaving devices and signage be installed at 2 primary beach locations: Port Sydney Beach and Hutcheson Beach as Phase One.
- This will allow staff to re-categorize municipally owned access points to water locations in order to determine the locations that the devices should be placed for potential future phases.
- This approach allows for the creation of an Operations Plan to include inspections, maintenance and to track the occurrence of vandalism.

### **Drowning Prevention Information:**

Appendixes 1 and 2 are the reports from the "2020 Ontario Drowning Report" by the Lifesaving Society with information prepared by the Drowning Prevention Research Center and the "Canadian Drowning Preventions Plan" by the Drowning Prevention Research Center.

It should be noted that only drownings that resulted in a fatality are record. Non-fatal drowning (I.E people who were rescued or performed a self rescue) are not recorded and information provided does not represent the effectiveness of lifesaving equipment.

Ontario Waterfront Safety Standard recommends that waterfronts that are unsafe for swimming have signage posted recommending against swimming. Dangerous conditions include: drop-offs, currents, and underwater hazards. Huntsville boasts numerous beaches, waterfront areas, and other points of access to water. Because of the magnitude of the number of locations where water is present and the difficulty it may pose to install effective signage at each of these locations, it is not recommended that signage be posted at all points of access to water, but rather staff will continue to monitor and recommend signage where it is appropriate and effective.

### **Neighbouring Towns following standards:**

- Gravenhurst promotes 5 swimming locations and follows waterfront guidelines and has both; guarded beaches and unsupervised beaches.
- Bracebridge promotes 9 swimming locations with equipment and follows waterfront guidelines, with unsupervised beaches.
- Both follow the Lifesaving standards.

### **Options**

1. Staff be directed to purchase, install and maintain the appropriate lifesaving equipment with signage at the Port Sydney Beach and Hutcheson Beach as Phase One of the program. The estimated cost to purchase lifesaving equipment and installation would be approximately \$2,800 and would require additional staff resources to inspect and maintain equipment at each location (**recommended**)
2. Staff be directed to create and implement Operations Plan to include waterfront access equipment and signage and update and categorize all Town water access points. (**recommended**)
3. Staff be directed to report back to Council the future recommended Phases of this project. (**recommended**).
4. Staff be directed to purchase, install and maintain the appropriate lifesaving equipment with signage at all Town of Huntsville advertised swimming locations (approximately 17 locations). The estimated cost to purchase lifesaving equipment would be approximately \$23,800 and would require additional staff resources to inspect and maintain equipment at each location. (not recommended)
5. Staff be directed to purchase, install and maintain the appropriate lifesaving equipment with signage at all Town of Huntsville known swimming locations (approximately 40 locations). The estimated cost for purchase of lifesaving equipment \$56,000 and would require additional staff resources to inspect and maintain equipment at each location. (not recommended)

### **Capital**

For the installation of a Vandal proof holder, a buoy and a rope.

#### **Equipment and installation:**

Ring Buoy & Rope Equipment Cost: \$300.00

Ring Buoy Holder: \$300.00

Signage: \$400 (approximately)

Installation (completed internally with Parks & Operations staff): estimated cost of \$400.00 each location.

**Total cost per installation of lifesaving equipment:** approx. \$1,400 per location (plus tax,, shipping etc.)

**Signage:**

Cost of signage would be approximately \$400 (depending on graphics). If the Town is recommending increased signage, staff will bring back a report for full costing and recommended funding sources. Additional signage is not noted as an option above.

Expenditure is not currently part of the 2021 capital or operating budget. Based on the recommendation in the report, equipment be purchased out of the recreation & leisure Capital Budget in 2021 and be added to the capital plan for replacement. If additional locations are recommended by Council, staff will bring back a report for full costing and recommended funding sources.

**Operational**

Depending on the locations that are being recommended by Council, the budget and forecast will need to include staffing resources to complete installation and regular maintenance as per Waterfront Safety Operational Plan.

- Equipment costs for installation and maintenance for the two locations proposed can be funded by the Aquatic's small tools and equipment budget.
- Frequent visual inspections at the Port Sydney Beach and Hutcheson Beach (recommended) location is not anticipated to significantly increase any cost to the parks department or aquatics budget.

**Council Strategic Direction / Relevant Policies / Legislation / Resolutions**

Strategic Plan Goals:

- Recreation and Leisure: Promotion of healthy active living in Huntsville and providing the programs and opportunities for recreation for all.
- Continuous Improvement: Ensure Town infrastructure and service levels respond to the needs of a prosperous and progressive community
- Municipal Services and Operations: Ensure municipal operations are streamlined, sustainable, inclusive, efficient and effective

**Attachments**

[Canadian Drowning Prevention Plan, 8th Edition \(May 2021\) lifesaving drowning-2020 on en 2020-06-13](#)

**Consultations**

List of consultations:

- Lifesaving Society
- Stephen Hernen - Director of Operations and Protective Services
- Colleen MacDonald - Manager of Parks and Cemeteries
- Julia McKenzie, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer

**Respectfully Submitted:**                    Cameron Labonte, Manager of Aquatics

**Manager Approval (if required):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Director Approval:**                    Simone Babineau, Director of Community Services

**CAO Approval:**                    Denise Corry, Chief Administrative Officer