



Reopening Victoria Beach

Next Steps

**Submission to
Cobourg's Committee of the Whole**

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Resident

Check Against Delivery

Your Worship, Deputy Mayor and members of Council.

I'm Paul Pagnuelo, a Cobourg resident.

This afternoon, there are two aspects regarding the beach that I would like to address.

The first deals with when it should be re-opened.

The second deals with a long-standing contentious issue amongst residents and that is the free use of the beach by non-residents of Cobourg.

You are aware of my personal position which I shared with you in June as to why the beach should be closed for the summer.

As a Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for carefully considering every public submission and coming to a unanimous decision that put public health and safety first.

Before you are four options that staff have suggested.

- 1) Extend Closure to October 17th
- 2) Keep Beach Closed Only on Weekends to October 17th
- 3) Extend Closure Only Until After Labour Day and Re-Open September 8
- 4) Another Option Determined by Council.

But before examining them, let's first consider the backdrop, as we quickly come to an end of a sunny, hot summer.

This would have been a great year to cool off and enjoy our beach.

What we learned is that public health and safety was the top priority for the vast majority of Cobourg residents.

Although disappointed that our beach was off limits, we also found it was not the end of the world.

As we enter the fall season the Public Health Agency of Canada says the direction COVID-19 takes could go in a few different ways this fall and winter, ranging from small spikes to a worst case scenario where Canada experiences a massive second wave in the fall that overwhelms the health system.

The experts say it's clear that over the next year, we will be battling rises and falls in case numbers and may have to lock down again as a result.

In terms of the four options, unfortunately, the staff report does not provide a costing for each, which would have been useful in arriving at an evidence-based decision.

Under each of the four scenarios, it should be noted that there will be no lifeguards. Although washrooms will remain closed, port-o-potties will be available.

Without the benefit of comparative costs, my recommendation to Council today is to choose Option 1.

Keep the Beach Closed to October 17th.

Let me explain.

I recognize that everyone has the urge to return to some degree of normalcy after a long, hot summer.

But after considering the province has just extended its emergency orders until September 22nd and there has been another bump in Ontario cases, we should continue to exercise caution.

This bug still has no cure and the risks continue to outweigh the benefits.

It is a terrible disease that attacks the organs and we should not rush re-opening at this stage.

The second part of my delegation deals with what everyone knows is a long-standing irritant with a vast majority of Cobourg residents and businesses and that is free access to Victoria Beach by people who are non-residents of Cobourg.

Although past Councils have sidestepped the issue, it has become clear during the public debate on this summer's beach closure, that the subject can no longer be ignored.

We need to examine the issue in its entirety from several different aspects.

And when studying the issues related to fairness to local residents, I sincerely hope we can have an adult conversation.

Let's be clear from the outset, charging no-residents an access fee is neither a human right, social justice or racism issue, which people will always raise as a defence or strategy when they object to something.

My recommendation would be to establish a Task Force to examine the following and to develop a policy recommendation for consideration by Council.

- Composition
 - Cobourg residents.
 - DBIA Representatives
 - Chamber of Commerce representatives.
 - Staff to provide research and secretariat services.
- Reports To

Emily Chorley, Co-ordinator, Parks and Recreation Services.
- Duration

Three months with a deliverable of December 1, 2020.
- Workplan
 - Identify all costs and revenues related to Victoria Beach and other Town owned beaches.
 - Identify those costs specifically related to beach tourists, including advertising.
 - Quantify benefits and disadvantages of hosting beach tourists vs. visitors.
 - Survey of downtown and other merchants on beach tourist traffic and dollar spend.
 - Compare practices of other Ontario municipalities with lake access.
 - Compare practices of other municipalities outside of Ontario.
 - Compare practices of federal and Ontario beaches.
 - Identify all impacts on residents of beach tourism.
 - Develop a pricing model for distinguishing between residents, other Northumberland residents and non-residents (e.g. Durham Region, GTA, etc.)
 - Develop a parking model for handling beach traffic.

- Deliverable
 - Provide Council with a full report and recommendations by December 1st for approval in principle.
 - Council to consider public engagement on the proposed recommendations prior to final approval.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I would be pleased to take any questions you may have.