



OAKVILLE

REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: August 9, 2022

FROM: Parks and Open Space Department

DATE: July 26, 2022

SUBJECT: Update Fishing Restrictions

WARD: Town-wide

Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report from the Parks and Open Space department dated July 26, 2022; be received.
2. That the fishing restrictions (May 15 – October 15) within the pilot program approved by Council in May 2021 be made permanent on town parkland.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- For decades there had been restrictions which did not allow fishing in Oakville and Bronte harbours during the recreational boating season.
- During the pandemic in 2020 there was a heightened interest in fishing within Oakville and Bronte harbours due to the fact that people were unable to travel due to the pandemic restrictions.
- In May 2021 Council approved a 1 year pilot program (June 2021 – June 2022) that amended fishing restrictions by allowing year round fishing on the west pier in Bronte, as well as adding 2 months onto the fishing season within our harbours
- Staff implemented the necessary communications to the public through new signage, website updates, and communications to stakeholders within the fishing community.
- The changes have been accepted by the community and no concerns have been brought forward by residents or stakeholders.
- Staff are recommending the changes enacted through the pilot program, become permanent.

- Allow fishing from the west pier in Bronte with no seasonal restrictions.
- Allow additional spring and fall fishing by amending the restricted period to be May 15 - October 15.
- This report fulfils the Council direction to report back following conclusion of the pilot program.

BACKGROUND:

During the pandemic in 2020 there was a heightened request for fishing within Oakville and Bronte harbours due to the fact that people were unable to travel due to the pandemic restrictions. For decades there had been fishing restrictions which did not allow fishing in Oakville and Bronte harbours during the recreational boating season. Casting into the channel on either the Bronte or Sixteen Mile Creek during boating season, has always been viewed as a safety risk. There is an excess of 700 boats moored within the inner harbours along with high volume of vessel movement in and out of the harbours. As a result, it is extremely busy. Combining power and sailboat traffic, with the kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards, wakeboards, our inner harbours are incredibly busy with recreational boating and water based activity. Additionally, the Oakville Yacht Squadron and Bronte Harbour Yacht Club operate very successful youth sailing schools in July and August, which further adds to the volume of activity within the inner harbours. Prior to the initiation of the pilot program fishing had always been restricted within the harbours from April 15 - November 15 each year.

The May 2021 staff report to Council recommended the easing of fishing restrictions on a pilot program basis. The pilot would operate from June 2021 – June 2022 with staff reporting back upon the completion of the pilot. This report fulfils the Council directive to report back on the pilot program.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

In May 2021 Council approved a report whereby fishing restrictions would be eased while at the same time being cognizant of the need to safeguard the safety of pedestrians walking on piers and waterfront parkland, as well as boaters using our creeks as access in and out of our inner harbours. (Please see Appendix A for May 2021 report)

In the May 2021 report Council approved a 1 year pilot program to determine the impacts of amending the fishing season in both Oakville and Bronte harbours. These amendments included;

1. Allow fishing from the west pier in Bronte with no seasonal restrictions.

In summer 2020, in response to the increase in desire for fishing, staff allowed fishing to be permitted on the Bronte west pier but only on the lake side. That change was well received and well adhered by the fishing community. Through the pilot program, the Bronte west pier became exempt of any seasonal restrictions and fishing was permitted on both sides of the pier. This accommodated more fishing opportunities for residents and provided a year-round option. Staff believed this change was appropriate because there is very little pedestrian activity on the Bronte west pier. Secondly, there are navigational buoy markers within the channel and boaters should be within buoys which therefore would allow fishing to occur from the east side of the pier.

2. Allow additional spring and fall fishing by amending the restricted period to be May 15 - October 15

This amendment to the fishing restrictions permitted an additional 2 months of fishing. (Previous restricted period was April 15 – November 15). The benefit of this change allowed additional early season spring fishing for species as chinook salmon. This revised period is more in alignment with the recreational boating season. Spring boat launch for the Town and Clubs is early May and boats are to be removed from the harbour by October 15. Hence allowing additional spring and fall fishing was deemed to not impact the recreational boating community and maintained a restricted period when waterfront parks and piers experience the heaviest pedestrian usage.

With the easing of fishing restrictions through the pilot program, there was the possibility of additional enforcement required by Municipal Enforcement Services (MES), which was monitored during the pilot period. Follow up discussions with MES indicates no additional workload with the changes to the fishing season. In 2020 when fishing concerns arose from the community; MES received 42 calls compared to 4 calls in 2021. Service Oakville reports the Town's fishing web page had 3,101 views in 2021, and 1,357 views so far in 2022.

Overall, the changes made through the 1 year pilot program are deemed to be successful. Staff are not aware of any concerns from residents, and casual conversations with people fishing, has yielded positive comments. Staff did reach out to the Halton Region Salmon and Trout Association (HRSTA) as they are one of the Region's largest stakeholders for recreational and sport fishing. Benjamin Gottfried one of the Directors within HRSTA responded with the following;

HRSTA has held a number of meetings since the fishing access improvements that were made and I have heard of no complaints of concerns from either side. I feel

this means no news is good news in terms of fishermen and pedestrian making shared use of the waterfront area.

The adjustments that have been made make a good case for continued shared access for both fishing and other public usages.

Staff have also reviewed several fishing social media outlets and again no concerns have been raised by contributors.

Conclusion

Staff believe the changes implemented through the pilot program have produced positive results and should be permanent. Oakville is a lakefront community and as such at every opportunity we actively promote access to the water. Safety remains the highest priority as well as accessibility. Staff believe that fishing is a recreational component of a lakefront community, and the changes achieve a balance between shared uses of our inner harbour areas while remaining cognizant of safety concerns. Oakville supports recreational and sport fishing through participating in both the Great Ontario Salmon Derby and the Silver Salmon Challenge through operating weigh stations for each competition at the outer harbour marina in Bronte. Once again, this past April, Oakville participated in the penning and release of 40,000 juvenile salmon in Bronte harbour so they are imprinted from Bronte and will return to spawn off Bronte shores. Fishing is an important and well supported recreational activity in Oakville.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

In preparation of this report staff consulted stakeholders in the fishing community as well as monitored social media outlets dedicated to fishing.

(B) FINANCIAL

There is no financial impact associated with this report. All signs currently reflect the recommended updated fishing restrictions.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Municipal Enforcement Services was consulted in the preparation of this report.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:

- Foster community engagement by enhancing fishing as a recreational activity.
- Be the most livable town in Canada.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

Climate change is influencing more and more migratory fish species to waters off Oakville. Making permanent additional early and late season fishing, and year-round fishing from the Bronte west pier enhances this recreational activity.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Fishing Restrictions Council Report, May 25, 2021

Prepared by:

Chris Mark, Director
Parks and Open Space

Recommended by:

Colleen Bell, Commissioner
Community Services Commission