

REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: April 24, 2023

FROM: Parks and Open Space Department

DATE: April 11, 2023

SUBJECT: Fishing from Town Parkland Update

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. The report from the Parks and Open Space department dated April, 11 2023, be received.
2. That Council approve an evening fishing pilot program as outlined within this report and staff report back to Council Q1 2024.

KEY FACTS:

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

- Due to increasing interest in recreational fishing that arose during the pandemic, staff have been reviewing on-shore fishing restrictions from Town parkland in an effort to balance safety and the desire to fish from Town parkland, specifically Oakville and Bronte harbour.
- Fishing within the harbours has always been restricted during the summer months due to a safety conflict with recreational boaters, kayaks, canoes and heavy pedestrian use of piers and lakefront walkways.
- Through previous Council reports and pilot programs the restricted on-shore fishing period has been reduced a month in Spring and Fall to allow greater opportunity for on-shore fishing and fishing from the west pier in Bronte is available year round. (The restricted period is now May 15 – October 15 where signed)
- Through this update report staff were requested to review other opportunities for on-shore fishing as well as consider accessibility opportunities related to on-shore fishing.

- Staff are recommending a pilot program that permits evening fishing within designated areas of the east pier in Bronte as well as the east/west piers in Oakville from 9:00 pm – 12:00 am August 1 – October 15
- Staff would report back to Council in Q1 2024 on any issues or concerns related to the evening fishing program as well as an update on accessibility related to on-shore fishing.

BACKGROUND:

Parks staff have previously provided Council updates on amending fishing restrictions from Town parkland, mostly within the Bronte and Oakville harbours. During the pandemic there was an increased desire to participate in recreational fishing from many members of the community. In response to that desire Council approved extending the fishing season in the spring and fall, as well as approving year round fishing from the west pier in Bronte.

From the last update report which confirmed the above noted changes, staff were requested to further consult with stakeholders and report back on potential other enhanced opportunities for on-shore fishing, as well as review accessibility related to on-shore fishing. The report was requested to be brought back to Council in Q1 2023. This report fulfills the Council resolution.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Through a previous report to Council a revised fishing restriction period (May 15 – October 15) was approved. The period was revised to allow additional spring and fall fishing. In addition, year round fishing was approved on the west pier in Bronte harbour as it routinely has very little pedestrian usage beyond people fishing.

On-shore fishing restrictions have been traditionally put in place to ensure there is no conflict between people fishing, recreational boating, and pedestrians during summer months when use of parks, piers, creeks, escalate in activity and usage. There are numerous waterfront parks where fishing is prohibited through posted signage due to size of the park, safety issues with access to the water, and close proximity to residential properties. Those are not being considered for any fishing approvals. The most favoured fishing locations are within the Oakville and Bronte harbours and particularly the piers on the Sixteen Mile and Bronte Creeks. Within the harbours fishing is restricted from May 15 - October 15 for the reasons noted above.

Additional Fishing Opportunities:

In reviewing options to provide additional fishing during the restricted period (while still balancing the conflicts and safety issues between people fishing and boaters/pedestrians), night fishing has been flagged as a potentially reasonable opportunity. Fishing is often better in the late evening starting about dusk because the fish swim closer to shore due to reduced boat/canoe/kayak/paddleboard activity within the harbours and creeks. Secondly, due to darkness fish are prone to be closer to shore than during daylight hours. Besides the technical reasons for better fishing after dusk, it would allow recreational/hobby fishing to occur in the later evening hours when the weather is warm and activity in our parks and creeks is reduced. During the pandemic staff heard from multiple residents they would appreciate the opportunity to go to one of the piers and fish for a couple of hours in the evening after spending the day at work. Fishing can be a stress reliever for some people.

In contemplating night fishing, staff are cognizant of the Parks Closed at 10:00 pm as contained with the Parks By-law. It is rare that staff would be recommending to Council approval of an activity in a park beyond 10:00 pm, (beyond a one time occurrence or special event) but staff believe allowing some night fishing within Oakville and Bronte harbours represents a balance between park pedestrians and people wishing to engage in on-shore fishing. Staff suggest allowing night fishing within selected areas on both the piers in Oakville and Bronte. (please see Appendices A & B) Signs would be posted to delineate these areas. Staff are recommending permitting fishing from 9:00 pm – 12:00 am from August 1-October 15 which coincides with the salmon run and is toward the latter part of summer.

It is staff's opinion this new fishing opportunity should be on a pilot basis to determine the interest in night fishing and note any concerns expressed by the community or participants. Fishing is typically a quiet, sedentary activity that should not bother other park patrons or nearby residents during the evening hours. In fact many people fishing use it as an opportunity for reflection and contemplation. Staff believe in taking a measured approach and recommend using 2023 as a trial period before considering any expansion or making it permanent. Staff would return in Q1 2024 with an update report to Council

Accessibility & On-Shore Fishing:

At the most recent Council meeting regarding on-shore fishing staff were asked to consider accessibility. The most favoured on-shore fishing locations from Town parkland are the west and east piers in Bronte, followed by the east and west piers in Oakville harbour. The east and west piers in Oakville are accessible, as is the east pier in Bronte. Level, hard surface pathways lead to the piers and yellow

painted bullnoses line the edges of the piers. The west pier in Bronte is definitely not accessible. Staff recommend investigating removal of the steps to the pier and replaced with a ramp. Costs need to be investigated as well as discussion with Dept of Fisheries and Oceans who own the pier. Parks staff will also consult internally with staff who have accessibility expertise for any other recommended accessibility improvements.

Additionally, staff have discussed accessible fishing with Charterability. Charterability is a local registered non-profit charity dedicated to providing accessible recreational boating at no cost to people of all ages deprived of the opportunity by virtue of their physical limitations or personal circumstances. Charterability is based out of the Sixteen Mile Creek in Oakville harbour. In speaking with the association, they have provided accessible fishing in the past and would be pleased to provide individual's accessible fishing from their pontoon boat. Arrangements can be made directly through contacting Charterability. Staff will include this information within the Harbours pages on the Town website.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The public would be informed of these changes to on-shore fishing through posted signs, website updates and social media notifications. It would also be communicated to stakeholders such as HRSTA (Halton Region Salmon and Trout Association), Conservation Halton, Halton Marine Police and Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry. A local fishing advocate has also been notified of the report coming forward as he has previously delegated to Council.

(B) FINANCIAL

The cost associated with the signs required for denoting evening fishing can be incorporated within the Parks and Open Space approved 2023 operating budget. Accessibility costs associated with making the Bronte west pier will be investigated and reported back to Council if required.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

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

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal of livability.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

N/A

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Oakville Pier evening designated fishing areas

Appendix B – Bronte Pier evening designated fishing areas

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