

ORAL PRESENTATION ABOUT RECREATIONAL WATER RESULTS 2001 - 2004

On behalf of The Federation of Tiny Township Shoreline
Associations

Given by Judith Grant

November 8, 2004

Mayor Klug, Deputy Mayor Maurice, and Councillors Breckenridge, Millar and Panasiuk, I'm here today to speak to you about Recreational Water Results in Tiny Township for 2001 through 2004, and to ask that several actions be taken.

In 2001, as you probably know, the Federation of Tiny Township Shoreline Associations undertook, in concert with the Simcoe County District Health Unit, to gather the first complete set of statistics about water quality along the full length of Tiny Township's 72 kilometers of shore. That year roughly 30 beach associations and beaches participated. They took samples of swimming water at agreed upon locations on the morning of the first day after each summer weekend. Since 2001, our organization has continued to mount a volunteer swimming water sampling program for those associations that want current information about the water off their shores. This year 13 associations participated. We expect to conduct a comprehensive sampling program again in 2006.

This past summer, as was the case in previous years, we received a great deal of assistance from the Simcoe County District Health Unit. Eric Watson of the Midland branch provided a training session for volunteer samplers on the last weekend of June, at Balm Beach. The Health Unit provided forms and bottles. And once again it expanded the number of public beaches it monitors in Tiny Township; in 2000 it sampled only 6 beaches; this past summer it did 15.

This year the Township too helped out by transporting the samples taken by our volunteers to the Central Ontario Analytical Laboratory in Orillia - a Laboratory selected back in 2001 because it is the one that does bacti analysis for Tiny Township's Water Department. We are most grateful for this assistance.

We also owe a large debt of gratitude to the Laboratory. From the beginning it did analysis at a modest rate - and although prices have risen, the charge has remained the same as it was in 2001. Nonetheless, the costs were and are substantial - close to \$7000 in the first comprehensive year and this year \$1,752.66 for the 252 samples analyzed. The continuing willingness of shore residents to volunteer their

time and to cover the costs associated with the program is a clear indication of continuing concern about lake water quality.

We would add that not only has the Laboratory done analysis for us at cut rate prices, but this year, without being asked, it did the special analysis that is required to give accurate E. coli counts for heavily polluted samples without charge.

Each fall since 2001, I have drawn the results for samples taken in Tiny's Recreational Waters by beach volunteers, the Health Unit, Awenda Provincial Park and Camp Marygrove into a single comprehensive spreadsheet. These spreadsheets are available on *The Tiny Cottager* website under Water Report, and the one for the summer of 2004 is appended to the report that I've given to each of you. It reveals that there continue to be serious problems with water quality in the Township's streams and at many beaches.

Let me begin with STREAMS. We now have at least one year's data for 20 of Tiny Township's streams; for 10 or so we have a least two year's data, and for a number we have data for 3 or 4 years. A few have quite modest E. coli counts, but many are a continuing cause for concern. The Severn Sound Environmental Association's "Investigation of Water Quality of beaches on the Coast of the Township of Tiny," observes, on page 11, in a paragraph about "bather density", that

"Individual bathers were often observed wading or sitting in the water at the mouth of the streams at Balm Beach and Jackson Park Beach. These bathers could be at higher risk of being exposed to water flowing into the beach with elevated indicator bacteria."

Bathers, waders and paddlers run similar risks in other places in Tiny Township.

The hope is that the septic re-inspection program will gradually eliminate most such bacteria.

But we wonder whether streams might be made more of a focus of the septic re-inspection program than they have been hitherto. Would it not be a good idea, where a stream has had high counts, to extend septic re-inspections of properties along the stream back to its source, and also to have such streams monitored regularly? If streams continue to have high E. coli counts even after remedial work has been done on septics, then additional efforts – with the help of the Severn Sound Association or some other investigative group — should be made to trace problems to their source. Perhaps a leaky septic escaped notice. In some areas wild

life such as beavers may be the source, and if that is the case, then we probably need to accept the fact and keep away from such affected streams and associated lake water. In other places it is possible that farm animals may be the source. To find out, we may need to make use of new tests that make it possible to identify the species that is the source of E. coli bacteria. (We append an article from *The Globe and Mail* about research being done in this area at the University of Guelph.)

All this will take time, and in the meantime children are playing in stream ponds with high E. coli counts and swimmers are not giving polluted streams a wide enough berth. Now that some facts are available, both the Township and private landowners have a responsibility to let people know about potential dangers. If they do not, there are liability issues. We would like to see some thought put into appropriate wording and design for signs, possibly by the Health Unit or by the Severn Sound group, for use by the Township and for use, if they choose, by private landowners. (We append an article about an outbreak of E. Coli O157:H7 associated with bathing at a public beach in the Montreal area. What interests us is the relatively low level of E. coli present in the water and the fact that children ingested the water.)

A second area that needs consideration is the possibility that a significant source of bacteria in our swimming water lies OUTSIDE THE TOWNSHIP. After Keith Sherman presented the Severn Sound Association's report on its "Investigation of Water Quality of Beaches on the Coast of the Township of Tiny" he mentioned in conversation that he felt a review of all literature to do with currents in the Bay might prove useful. He suspected – but at that stage lacked the information to prove – that under some circumstances, swimming water quality along the western shore is affected by effluent from the Nottawasaga River. This is possible because the Nottawasaga is a very large, very polluted, river and its mouth is pointed straight at Tiny Township. A knowledgeable source told me that it ordinarily carries an E. coli load of roughly 7,000 per 100 ml of sample – and that that load soars to 15,000 when there is a sewage spill.

We hope that this review of literature has already been undertaken – or will be undertaken – and that any additional research that may be necessary to ascertain whether the Nottawasaga's polluted waters affect Tiny's recreational water quality will be done.

If there is a problem of importation, then it may be possible to involve the Ministry of the Environment. We note that once it was demonstrated that a stretch of Lake Huron's shore had become unswimable because of pollution entering the lake in streams, the Ministry of the Environment got

involved. Earlier this year, Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky announced that "Ontario is committed to cleaning up Lake Huron's beaches. First, we must get to the bottom of the problem. We have partnered with key local and federal partners to ensure we fully understand what is causing the pollution." (We append a news release about the MoE's involvement in cleaning up Lake Huron's beaches.)

The third point we'd like to address is the INVESTIGATION conducted by the Severn Sound Environmental Association in the summer of 2003 and reported on in May of this year. The field work they undertook and the report on it was meticulous. But the Recommendations enumerated at the end of the report under "Future Surveys" need to be turned into detailed proposals for the action, costed out, and accompanied by explanations of the utility of each suggestion. This needs to be done quickly if decisions are to be taken about what should be tackled during the next summer season. Indeed, we hope that Keith Sherman is here today to present a plan of action.