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# Lake mistakes could cost innocent lives

Perhaps it's time for society to take a harder stance on reckless winter recreationalists.

Earlier this month, town councillors suggested support for increasing water and ice rescue fines for Innisfil's fire department. It's a measure specifically aimed at rescue attempts on Lake Simcoe, especially during the winter season.

Those councillors were responding to the drowning deaths of three people on the lake over the last month. Two of the people who died were on a snowmobiling excursion, while the other person went ice fishing.

Police and the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs had issued warnings several days before each incident, noting the dangerous conditions on the lake. If the warnings weren't enough, warm weather and foggy conditions should have tipped the men off about staying away from the ice.

While both incidents happened off the shores of Georgina, fears of putting local emergency personnel in unnecessary danger have sparked a debate in Innisfil. Each winter, there are countless media reports of people who have either fallen through the lake, or have gone missing while ice-fishing or snowmobiling. When that happens, fire and rescue personnel are called, and asked to risk their lives.



## Comment

by Chris Simon

Obviously, those personnel have dangerous jobs, and know the associated risks. They're consistently called to fires, chemical spills and collision scenes, in some pretty poor weather conditions. But considering most winter lake incidents are easily avoidable through basic research on ice conditions, many rescue personnel are being placed in unnecessary danger.

Increasing municipal fines for rescue attempts may be a start towards serious deterrence efforts. But higher levels of government also need to come on board, and legislate jail time or other significant punishment for offenders, if they survive falling through the ice.

Maybe it's even time for a provincial awareness or marketing campaign, warning people to stay off the ice under certain conditions. A media campaign, with website addresses and telephone numbers for ice condition updates would at least be an attempt by governments and police agencies to stop these incidents from occurring.

Media could also do a better job of spreading warnings before someone goes missing. Most newspapers, and television and radio stations have their own websites, which could easily show warnings. Radio and 24-hour news stations run frequent updates, and could also include something in their broadcast.

Even private businesses like gas stations and bait shops could aid an awareness campaign, using those media updates to give snowmobilers and ice-fishers current lake condition information while purchasing supplies.

But ultimately, responsibility lies with the outdoor enthusiast.

It's unfortunate when someone plunges through ice and into the cold waters of the lake each winter. Surely, most of those people do not mean to place themselves in a dangerous situation. But enthusiasts need to understand they're not the only people affected if an accident occurs.

Family members are forced to care for injured loved ones or mourn their senseless deaths. Rescue personnel have the pressures of staying safe on the ice, and attempting to recover the recreationalists alive. When a rescue attempt fails, the personnel can be emotionally scarred.

It seems like a lot of potential pain just for a good time.

# Big Bay Point letter was inaccurate

## Letters From Our Readers

There are a number of factual errors in the letter from Donna Procher published last week (Resort should be paying homeowner hook-ups), but the most regrettable thing is the apparently careless attitude toward the health and water quality of Lake Simcoe.

First, the factual matter: Procher mistakenly links a small, failed housing

development south of the Big Bay Point Resort site, and dry wells in that area, to the work yet to be done for the resort. The two projects have nothing in common and she is wrong to link them.

The availability of sanitary sewers and treated water in an area that now does not have access to these services will be of real benefit: It is a well known fact that phosphorous and other nutrients have been flowing into Lake Simcoe for years, including from outdated and leaky septic systems that ring the lake.

It is regrettable that Procher does not apparently wish to contribute to helping to improve the quality of the lake's water by hooking up to services when they become available.

The cost to property owners of hooking up to any municipality's sewer and water system is set by the municipality itself, and it is usual that property owners share the cost of hooking up to services when they become available, just as they share the cost of paying for water and sewage treatment once they are

hooked up. I am sure Procher would not expect to get for free what many of her fellow citizens have had to pay for.

While there will be local connection costs for the existing residents (if Innisfil decides to hook them up to the system), those costs will be much less than if the taxpayers had to also pay the cost of expanding the plant and extending sewer main to the area, which they do not, because Geranium is bearing those costs.

Geranium is quite prepared to pay the \$10

million cost of making the service available in the area; that is a considerable benefit, to both the town and the lake. Given the awareness we all should have of the importance of maintaining Lake Simcoe for future generations, Procher may wish to reconsider and do the environmentally responsible thing when the service becomes available. The 'Not in my backyard' attitude will do nothing to help the lake.

Jim Maclean,  
Geranium Corporation

# Good people drive on Highway 400

## Letters From Our Readers

I am writing this letter in the hopes that the angels on the Highway 400 at the beginning of Innisfil area on Monday evening at 8:15 p.m. will know that we are

so thankful and god bless you all for your unselfish care you gave to a couple.

Our van hit black ice and went out of control, rolled off the highway and finally came to a stop upside down. I remember a man's voice asking if we were alright

I was hanging upside down in the van. My

husband was able to get out. A lady helped my husband, his eye looked bad at the time.

I remember quite a few people stopped and tried to help, even through the highway was very bad. But they noticed that no police or emergency service vehicles had arrived at the

site yet. They called for help.

I so want to thank these people for their unselfish act.

There are very good people out there. I also would like people to remember to fasten their seat belts. I do not think things would have

turned out so good for us otherwise, in fact, I know it. If we had not have had our belts on, I would have been thrown out of the window for sure.

God bless those people and thank you.

Susanne and Russ  
Occhipinti,  
Alcona Beach

# MP Guergis may be in over her head

## Letters From Our Readers

It looks like Helena Guergis, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and

International Trade, is over her head.

The Liberal leader Stephan Dion visited Afghanistan recently and Dion said that she put his security at risk by revealing the details of his itinerary in public. Dion's letter calls her

actions a gross breach of security, irresponsible, and calls into question her ability to fulfill her duties as a member of cabinet. The lives of both Stephane Dion and Michael Ignatieff were both put at risk.

Now, Guergis has shown

even more lack of judgment in this Green Party person's opinion by publishing the Guide for Simcoe-Grey Winter 2008, which is really a thinly disguised advertisement for herself. The front cover shows a picture of herself and a total

of eight pictures of herself throughout the 16-page booklet.

Just who paid for your advertisement sent to tens of thousands of people in Simcoe-Grey?

Peter Ellis,  
Simcoe-Grey Green Party