



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Spring Safety Message: Be Careful Around Waterways Hazardous Conditions on and Around Bodies of Water**

February 26, 2021, Oshawa, ON – Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA) is reminding all watershed residents of the existing dangers near bodies of water as winter transitions to spring. We are urging everyone to keep friends, family and pets away from local creeks, wetlands, Lake Ontario and other waterways. With spring comes warmer air temperatures, increased rain, thawing soil, melting snow and shifting ice. This causes higher, faster flowing water in watercourses and unstable conditions on ice-covered waterbodies. Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority acknowledges the increased use of areas adjacent to all waterbodies during the pandemic and recommends extra caution this year when enjoying outdoor activities as regional health units lift the stay-at-home orders.

Although Durham Region, and other areas across the Greater Toronto Area, had a slow start to winter, the month of February has brought significantly colder air temperatures and lots of snow. As a result, CLOCA staff have noted that while there are no reported ice jams in their jurisdiction, there is a significant amount of ice formation in local watercourses, as well as a large snowpack. It is important to note that daytime high air temperatures have already begun trending above zero degrees Celsius, which will cause a gradual decrease to snowpack and ice cover on local waterways.

Safety and anticipated flooding risks are anticipated to continue as we transition from winter to spring. Melting snow resulting from warming air temperatures, accompanied by spring rainfall and thawing frost, across the CLOCA jurisdiction, are anticipated to cause higher and faster flowing water in local watercourses.

The current ice coverage in CLOCA's watercourses can result in ice jams if air temperatures and flows increase quickly. Slippery and unstable streambanks and extremely cold water temperatures can also lead to dangerous conditions close to any body of water. It is possible for ice and snow cover on watercourses, lakeshore areas or other bodies of water to weaken and become unstable with warmer air temperatures.

Be safe this spring and remember the following tips:

- Keep friends, family, and pets away from the edges of all bodies of water.
- Avoid all recreational activities in or around water, especially near ice jams or ice-covered watercourses and waterbodies.
- Do not attempt to walk on ice-covered waterbodies or drive through flooded roads or fast-moving water.
- If you live close to water bodies that may flood, move objects such as chairs or benches away from the water's edge to avoid losing them during potential spring high-water.
- Avoid walking close to/across riverbanks and ice-covered water to prevent falling through, as riverbanks can become unstable in the spring due to snowmelt and erosion.
- Rescuing another person or a pet from icy water is dangerous, so call 911 immediately if you see anyone who has fallen through the ice.

The International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board (ILOS RB) is [forecasting](#) a slow, seasonal rise in Lake Ontario water levels in the coming weeks, which is normal for this time of year. Lake Ontario water levels are currently lower than they were at this time in 2020 by approximately 0.6 metres, however, Lake Erie water levels remain high and will continue to contribute significant volumes of water to Lake Ontario this spring.

It is still too early to forecast spring and summer peak water levels for Lake Ontario, which depend on factors like the anticipated increase to inflows from Lake Erie; the anticipated spring rainfall and runoff volume into Lake Ontario; spring peak flow of the Ottawa River into the St. Lawrence River, which influences the Lake Ontario outflow at the Moses-Saunders Dam in Cornwall.

For more information about Lake Ontario water levels and forecasts, please visit the ILOS RB website at <https://ijc.org/>

For more information on your specific watershed, contact your local Conservation Authority:

Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority	905-579-0411
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority	416-661-6514
Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority	905-895-1281
Conservation Halton	905-336-1158
Credit Valley Conservation	905-670-1615
Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority	905-885-8173
Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority	705-424-1479
Kawartha Conservation	705-328-2271

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### **About Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority**

Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA) is a local, community-based, environmental organization and one of 36 Conservation Authorities responsible for managing watershed resources across Ontario. Established in 1958, CLOCA's jurisdiction is based on the watershed boundaries of four major watercourses and 18 minor watercourses draining an area of over 639 square kilometres. Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority's watershed stretches from the municipal boundaries of Ajax/Pickering to Clarington, and north from Lake Ontario to the crest of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority provides a wide variety of science-based watershed management programs and services, delivered in partnership with their municipal partners, local landowners, environmental agencies, and all levels of government. Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority's municipal partners include the Region of Durham, the cities of Oshawa and Pickering, the towns of Ajax and Whitby, the Municipality of Clarington, and the townships of Scugog and Uxbridge.

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