

Editorial ? Don't forget drowning is preventable

If the headline to this piece seems familiar, there's a good reason.

We used those exact words a little more than a year ago. We were coming out of a weekend last July in which three young people died in two separate tragedies in Ontario, and they took place a couple of days after a little girl had drowned near Montreal.

And now it seems we are reliving this all over again, in light of last week's tragedy that claimed the life of a little girl in Vaughan. The loss is tragic, and also senseless, because incidents like these can be prevented. But in order to do that, it takes vigilance, and a clear understanding of just how fast these situations can develop.

The grieving mother of a young child who drowned last year summed it up well; "It happened so fast."

How very right she was! As we stressed a year ago, it doesn't take long at all.

In a matter of just a couple of seconds, a child playing near water, be it on the side of a pool, on a dock or just wading, can suddenly be in serious trouble with next to no warning. And children who suddenly find themselves under water don't scream or make noise.

There can easily be nothing to raise an alarm until it's too late.

Some of us have actually seen such occurrences, such as a child who's been standing on the steps in a pool, having a good time, deciding to go back into the water for a bit more fun without telling anyone, and going down one step too many. Some of us have been in situations like that, and they have ended happily. It causes nightmares to think what happens when there's no adult around to raise the alarm.

In light of the tragedies we wrote about last year, there were a number of useful suggestions offered by various authorities, like the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario, The Royal Life Saving Society Canada, etc. A lot of these recommendations really involved little more than using common sense, and they also appreciated the reality that it's not just children who are at risk.

Learning to swim is one of the recommendations that was made, along with making sure that people wear a lifejacket or a personal flotation device when on the water, even if one is a strong swimmer, as fatigue can set in very quickly. And naturally, adults should closely supervise children at all times around water.

Like we stated above, a lot of this is simple common sense.

But the consequences involved here are not simple. There is a heavy reality involved, and the real tragedy is it could well happen again, with no warning at all.