

# Skating no longer permitted on Palgrave Pond, Town and TRCA agree

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A longstanding Palgrave tradition will be no more.

On December 3, members of the volunteer group Palgrave Pond Community Inc. (PPCI) were told by Town of Caledon staff that skating would no longer be allowed on the Palgrave Pond and that they could no longer maintain the pond for skating.

PPCI member and Palgrave resident Bernie Rochon said he was disappointed with the lack of notice and consultation for the decision. He said it came out of nowhere.

Under the leadership of Ken Hunt, a Palgrave resident known as the 'Ice Angel', the Palgrave Pond has been diligently maintained for public use for the last 25 years. Each year, many Caledon residents come out to enjoy playing hockey on the pond or skating the skating trail.

Rochon said the PPCI was created just three years ago, as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Town of Caledon implemented new rules and regulations at that time. The PPCI non-profit corporation was created so that insurance could be bought and a bank account maintained. With the help of then-councillor Jennifer Innis, skating on the Palgrave Pond was able to continue under the new rules and regulations.

Rochon said last time skating on the Palgrave Pond came into question, there was a massive show of support from the community. He said the same will be necessary again if there is to be any hope of skating on the pond in the future.

Rochon said so many people have put time and money into maintaining the pond over the years.

'It's a real shame? It's just not right,' he said. 'It's at the core of the community, to have it gone feels unreal.'

In an email to The Citizen, Caledon's Commissioner of Community and Human Services Catherine McLean acknowledged it's sad to end skating on Palgrave Pond.

'The changing climate, reducing ice cover and inconsistent temperatures means that the pond ice is unstable and risky in more spots every winter,' said McLean. 'We encourage our residents to access several Town-run outdoor community rinks across Caledon. We also want to take a moment to recognize and thank Ken Hunt, Palgrave's Ice Angel, and his family who made skating on the pond possible for more than 25 years. Thank you for supporting our community.'

In an email to the Citizen, TRCA director of development and engineering services Sameer Dhalla said it is important to prioritize safety.

'Skating on any body of water always comes with significant risks, such as inconsistent ice formation, underwater currents, and obstacles like rocks or submerged debris. These factors can create unsafe conditions, even if the surface appears solid. In addition to these general risks, a changing climate and inconsistent temperatures pose an increased risk to anyone utilizing the site,' said Dhalla. 'TRCA does not monitor ice safety, and skating on TRCA properties remains a prohibited activity. Residents who choose to venture out onto ice despite warnings, do so at their own risk. To ensure safety, 'No Trespassing' and 'Stay Off Ice' signage has been posted around the pond to clearly indicate that public access is prohibited and that no activities on the ice will be allowed.'

The email stated that in December 2021, the TRCA entered into a three-year agreement with the Town of Caledon to facilitate

recreational skating on Palgrave Pond. According to the email, the agreement allowed skating to take place due to community management and supervision of skating activities while addressing insurance, liability and risk management to ensure safety and accessibility for skaters.

?This agreement expired at the end of March 2024 with the mutual understanding that it would not be renewed,? said Dhalla.

The email notes the TRCA has recently issued a winter safety message on its website that it encourages the public to view.

?As a safe alternative, we recommend that residents use municipally approved skating rinks that are open to the public. For those seeking safe and enjoyable outdoor activities, TRCA offers a variety of recreation programs to connect with nature while staying secure,? said Dhalla. ?TRCA looks forward to continue working with the Town of Caledon in supporting recreational uses in areas surrounding the Palgrave Dam.?