

# Reviving Acton's Fairy Lake

By Ann Lawlor,  
Mayor of Halton Hills

*Prospect Park located on the edges of Fairy Lake in Acton, Town of Halton Hills, is near the Niagara Escarpment and is within the Credit River watershed. Over the years, the water quality of the lake has degraded and swimming is not recommended. Currently, there is a five-year plan to restore the lake environment to health and enhance its beauty. Ann Lawlor, Halton Hills mayor, explains what has been happening here.*

## Why Fairy Lake Needs Rehabilitation

Prospect Park is an approximately 25-acre parkland complex, situated on a 14-acre peninsula that extends into the approximately 69-acre Fairy Lake. The picturesque lake in the centre of Acton is a mill pond created in the 1800s that now struggles with high levels of salt, nitrogen and phosphorus. These pollutants come from decaying organic matter and the nearby neighbourhood and farm runoff into creeks and channels that flow into the lake. Waterfowl droppings, particularly from geese, foul

the park and beach area and then leach into the water.

Fairy Lake, though a habitat for some of Ontario's at-risk species, is also plagued by invasive flora and fauna which are outcompeting native plants and animals. Invasive fish include the destructive Round Goby which eats the eggs of native species such as bass. Similarly, phragmites, tall grasses that are highly invasive and destructive, have formed dense thickets along the shoreline and are displacing native vegetation. This results in a loss of biodiversity and reduces the resilience and health of the lake. All these factors diminish access to and enjoyment of Fairy Lake and degrade the downstream Credit River environment.

## Is There Danger in Using the Lake?

The Halton Regional Public Health Unit has regularly tested water quality at the Prospect Park beach area and often recommends against swimming due to high bacteria counts related to waterfowl and poor water quality where there is blue-green algae accumulation. Since the algae can cause skin irritation and nausea, restoring

the lake's health is not just about beauty and nature, but about safety for everyone.

## What's the Plan?

Last year, I joined forces with Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), Town staff, and the Region to launch the Black Creek Subwatershed Project. We dusted off old studies and, together, developed a five-year strategy to clean up Fairy Lake, supported by Halton Region funding. Now in year two, CVC experts are working side-by-side with our community to bring the "Fairy Lake Revival!" project to life—a name chosen to inspire public participation and pride.

Similarly, the SNAP, or Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan, is a multi-faceted neighborhood program of CVC that has been initiated in Peel and in Hungry Hollow in Georgetown. We are introducing it in Acton to support new environmental activities with businesses and residents. All of it will help "clean up" and improve the health and biodiversity in Fairy Lake and the surrounding area.

Last summer's Mayor's Fishing Derby kicked off the Fairy Lake Revival! and public participation. Local

fishers, young and not-so-young, were able to snag a few dozen invasive Round Goby fish and get them out of the lake. We all had fun and learned a lot that day!

## Specific Actions

CVC's Neighbourhood Action Plan will support the Town of Halton Hills' Fairy Lake Revival! initiative by improving water quality, creating healthier habitat and supporting wildlife. Acting on recommendations from the Black Creek Subwatershed Study, Halton Region's Total Phosphorus Offset Strategy and Town of Halton Hills' Fairy Lake Water Quality Update, SNAP will help reduce phosphorus and other pollutants entering Black Creek and Fairy Lake, giving fish, aquatic insects and many species better chances to thrive. Climate-smart habitats created by tree plantings and green infrastructure will cool urban areas for people, while creating forage paths for pollinators, shaded corridors for wildlife and more.



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**Heritage Designation**

Not only natural features are important for preservation. Last year, Halton Hills Council gave a heritage designation to the public property at Prospect Park and Fairy Lake. The identified attributes contributing to the heritage value include the central location within Acton; existing built features - the 1926 bandstand and pillars at the park entrance, the 1867 Acton Drill Shed and the 1934 Pioneer Cemetery Cairn. Natural and human-made features within the landscape include: Fairy Lake and the extant dam; the former drive track; and the mature deciduous and coniferous trees. Prospect Park and Fairy Lake represent a significant cultural heritage landscape, meeting eight out of nine

Ontario Heritage Act criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest. The park and lake are jewels of Acton, indeed!

**Achievements**

The big accomplishment is the development of an action plan, with funding, to remediate the lake and greater watershed. I'm excited to see Town and CVC staff connecting with local groups and residents near the lake and beyond to involve them in the cleanup plan and neighbourhood-based activity. The passion for Fairy Lake runs deep in our community and people are keen to join in. We are seeing environmental science in action and together we're making a real difference.



Hoping to catch a big one at the Mayor's Fishing Derby, Fairy Lake, July 2025. PHOTO BY BARRY BEST.

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