

Rawlson King and City of Ottawa responses to CBC News

1. Why isn't the City-owned part of McKay Lake open to the public (for swimming and other recreational activities)?

The eastern side of McKay Lake is owned by the City of Ottawa. Swimming and other recreational activities are not permitted on the eastern shore in keeping with the City's [Parks and Facilities Bylaw, No. 2004-276](#). All of McKay Lake is part of the [Caldwell-Carver Conservation Area](#), including the shoreline area on the west side of the lake. Since the focus of the area by definition is conservation, use of the lake for recreation by residents is limited and minimal.

As noted on the City's website, the rich woodland and water bodies of the Conservation Area support an abundant diversity of birds and other wildlife. Recreational public-use activities would damage the marsh and contribute to shoreline erosion, for example, as well as disrupt wildlife species and their habitat. There was an example of a makeshift dock being built on the east side many years ago, prior to amalgamation. Parks staff were dispatched to dismantle it. The cattails have still not fully recovered from the damage this caused.

As this was the site of a landfill operation several decades ago, there are likely hazardous materials under the eastern shoreline, which could pose a safety issue to anyone entering the lake from the shore. As well, because the lake is estimated to be between 8,000 and 10,000 years old, there are many metres of naturally-deposited bottom sediment, which have been previously studied by scientists from Queen's University and the former Geological Survey of Canada.

2. McKay Lake sits near an old landfill site. What impact has that had on the water quality? (aka is it even safe to swim in McKay Lake)?

The former Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton and then the City of Ottawa conducted ongoing water quality monitoring of McKay Lake for decades. In late April, the Environmental Remediation Unit of the City's Corporate Real Estate Office conducted soil and groundwater sampling surrounding McKay Lake and the conservation area due to the reported historical landfilling. The work mainly included test pit excavation, borehole drilling, monitoring well installation, and soil and groundwater sampling at various locations. The unit will be working over the coming months to analyze the samples that will undergo chemical analysis.