

# How you can help limit pollution

## Wash your car at a commercial car wash

When visiting a commercial car wash the water used to rinse your vehicle flows into drains that are connected to the sanitary sewer lines (just like your toilet, shower and washing machine) which take the soapy, dirty water to a treatment facility to be cleaned of contaminants.

On the other hand, when washing a car in your driveway, runoff containing cleaning products and dirt enter into the City's storm drainage network with the water that you use to rinse your car. When cleaning products and sediments leave the storm drainage network and enter City watercourses they cause damage to the plants and wildlife that call these bodies of water home.

## Dispose of hazardous waste at a proper facility

You can bring your hazardous waste (batteries, propane cylinders, pool chemicals, paints and cleaners etc.) to one of the Region of Peel's Community Recycling Centres. Please, never dump pollutants into a storm drain.

## Draining your pool or spa

For safe and enjoyable swimming or bathing, water in your swimming pool or spa is always chemically treated to prevent the growth of harmful organisms. When it comes time to discharge this water for closing or maintenance, pool chemicals make the water unsafe to discharge into the natural environment. Before you discharge pool or spa water, follow these simple steps to drain your pool or spa:

For saltwater pools: slowly drain to your indoor sanitary drain (floor drain or basement sink) during off peak times. Use a small pump and a hose no larger than 1 ¼ inch to prevent flooding.

For chlorine and bromine pools: stop adding chemicals 10 days before discharge, secure the pool for pets and children and leave the cover off to allow chemicals to breakdown in sunlight. Drain the pool directly to street using hose or discharge slowly to yard.

For **ALL** pools and spas: Remove leaves and other debris before discharge. Only discharge filter backwash water to sanitary sewer or use a disposable filter system. Waste filter cartridges can be disposed of with regular trash collection.

For more detailed information: The City has prepared Pool Water: Safe Water Practices for Pool & Spa Owners, a brochure that explains how to responsibly maintain your pool, available on our Pollution page.

## **Limit fertilizer use**

Fertilizers can help all kinds of plants to grow. Modern chemical fertilizer pellets can provide plant life in your gardens and on your lawn with nutrients to optimize growth, but if they are washed into the storm-drain they can also cause unwanted algae growth in local watercourses. Excessive algae in our watercourses and Lake Ontario can deplete the oxygen supply in the water causing harm to aquatic organisms. Also, some fertilizers can even contain chemicals that are hazardous to aquatic life.

Here are some ideas on how to limit fertilizer use and keep you lawn happy:

- Use topsoil or compost as top dressing on your lawn instead of fertilizer pellets
- Use a hand spreader for fertilizer pellets to keep the pellets on the lawn
- Apply grass seed to your lawn in the early spring and/or late fall season
- Water only once a week deeply for clay soil and every three to four days for sandy soil
- Remove thatch and aerate your lawn annually for clay soils
- Mow your lawn once a week, with the height of the mower raised to six or eight centimetres

## **Clean up after your pet**

Picking up your pet's waste with an appropriate bag and placing it in the trash helps keep our watercourses clean. If left where the waste can enter the storm drainage system, pet waste can release pathogens (germs like bacteria, worms, viruses etc.) into our water. These pathogens can infect pets, humans and wildlife that enter local watercourses and ponds that have been in contact with these pathogens. Pet waste, like fertilizers, can also stimulate detrimental algae growth in watercourses.

## **Limit salt use in the winter – shovelling first, helps salt work**

It is best to clear your driveway, walkways and steps before applying salt during the winter months. You will use less salt and still keep your driveway and pathways safe. You can also buy products that use alternatives to salt to reduce the harmful effects of traditional salt.

When salt melts ice and snow, the salt remains dissolved in the water. In the spring when the salted snow melts, all of this salt will either drain into the soil on your property where it can harm your plants or it can flow into the storm drainage networks where it can cause harm downstream. Our local streams already are

impacted by winter salt. The less salt we all use, the healthier our streams and Lake Ontario will be in the spring.

The City also takes steps to reduce the amount of salt applied for winter maintenance, but must use enough salt on City paths and roads and around public buildings for protection of public safety. Emergency vehicles, public transit and all transportation vehicles need to be able to travel safely all winter, especially on priority routes.

In springtime, the City also has a street sweeping program to collect sand applied in the winter to prevent the sand from blocking road stormdrains and filling in watercourses.

### **Sweep your driveway**

Instead of using a hose to clean your driveway, try sweeping the debris into a pile and throwing it in the trash. Using a hose to wash your driveway can send a lot of sediment, residual oil and soap into the City's storm drainage network. This debris can cause blockages that cause flooding and the sediment and pollution can also find its way into local watercourses which can negatively impact aquatic life.