

ATTACHMENT 5:

Stakeholder Input Executive Summary

To Inform the Toronto Personal Watercraft Safety Plan
March 2026

1. Overview

The City of Toronto developed a Personal Watercraft (PWC) Safety Plan in response to direction from City Council to address safety concerns related to personal watercraft activity along Toronto’s waterfront in advance of the 2026 summer season.

The initiative focuses on improving safety in areas where motorized watercraft operate near swimmers, paddlers, and other recreational users, particularly around City beaches and waterfront parks. The Plan is focused on PWCs due to the increased numbers of unpermitted PWC rentals in City beaches and waterfront parks in recent years.

To inform development of the Safety Plan, the City conducted a structured engagement process designed to gather input from waterfront users, stakeholders, and regulatory partners. This process included:

- A public ThoughtExchange survey conducted in February 2026
- A full-day Stakeholder Forum held on February 28, 2026
- A 2-hour Stakeholder “Closing the Loop” session held on March 16, 2026.
- Discussions with regulatory and enforcement partners

Together, these engagement activities helped to identify key safety concerns, operational realities, and potential actions that could improve safety along Toronto’s waterfront.

This report provides a summary of stakeholder input collected through the engagement activities; the full report on stakeholder input is available here:

[\(https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/parks-facility-plans-strategies/personal-watercraft-safety-plan/ \)](https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/parks-facility-plans-strategies/personal-watercraft-safety-plan/)

2. Engagement Activities

2.1 Public ThoughtExchange Survey

The ThoughtExchange survey gathered broad input from waterfront users, residents, and stakeholders. Survey participation included:

- 1,103 participants
- 1,249 individual thoughts submitted
- 20,794 ratings of participant ideas

Participants represented a wide range of waterfront perspectives, including:

- Beach and waterfront park users

- Near-shore and open-water swimmers
- Sailboat users
- Paddlers and non-motorized craft users
- Motorized vessel operators
- Community organizations
- Personal watercraft users and rental operators

Participants also identified locations where safety concerns related to PWC activity may be most pronounced, including:

- Toronto Islands
- Woodbine Beach
- Cherry / Clarke Beach
- Ward's Island Beach
- Hanlan's Point Beach
- Humber Bay Park West and East

2.2 Stakeholder Forum

On February 28, 2026, the City convened a full-day Stakeholder Forum bringing together 23 representatives from community organizations across the waterfront, marine operators, recreational user groups, enforcement agencies, and City staff.

The forum was designed to:

- Review the regulatory framework governing personal watercraft activity
- Present findings from the public ThoughtExchange survey
- Discuss potential actions to improve safety
- Identify implementation challenges and operational considerations
- Surface areas of alignment and disagreement among stakeholders

Participants engaged in facilitated discussions and breakout sessions, providing feedback on draft actions related to:

- Enforcement and compliance
- Public education and safety awareness
- Exclusion zones and spatial restrictions

2.3. Closing the Loop Virtual Meeting

On March 16, 2026, the City hosted a public virtual Closing the Loop session, bringing together 67 participants including waterfront stakeholders, community members, enforcement agency representatives, and City staff.

The session was designed to:

- Report back on findings from the public survey and Stakeholder Forum

- Present emerging directions for the Plan for the 2026 season
- Receive final questions before the plan proceeds to Council
- Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to share reactions and remain informed as the work progresses

When asked in two check-in polls whether the summaries of earlier engagement phases resonated, participants generally indicated alignment, with some suggesting areas for additional refinement.

During the session, participants raised questions and comments related to:

- Enforcement approaches on land and on the water, including jurisdiction, staffing, and penalties for illegal operators
- The need for a legal, regulated PWC rental option as a complement to enforcement
- Exclusion zones, including site-specific considerations for Woodbine Beach, Humber Bay, and Bluffer's Park
- Training, education, and best practices for rental operators and renters

3. Key Themes from Engagement

Across engagement activities, several consistent themes emerged regarding personal watercraft safety along Toronto's waterfront.

3.1 Enforcement of Existing Rules

Participants widely identified enforcement of existing navigation and safety rules as the most important factor in improving safety outcomes. Issues raised included inconsistent compliance with shoreline speed limits, PWCs operating too close to swimmers and non-motorized craft, and requests for greater enforcement capacity along the waterfront. Participants emphasized that visible and sustained enforcement is important for improving compliance and public confidence in waterfront safety measures.

3.2 Regulatory Clarity and Permitting Pathways

Some stakeholders also raised the absence of a clear legal pathway for compliant commercial PWC rental operations as a broader implementation issue. Participants noted that the lack of a formal permitting on City property or regulatory framework may make it harder to distinguish compliant operators from illegal activity, limit accountability, and complicate enforcement. Several participants suggested that a clearer permitting pathway for responsible operators could support safety objectives by clarifying expectations and strengthening the City's ability to focus enforcement on non-compliant operations, subject to jurisdictional and legal constraints.

3.3 Education and Public Awareness

Participants also identified education and communication as important tools for improving safety and supporting voluntary compliance. Suggested approaches included clearer communication of shoreline speed limits and navigation rules, education for first-time or visiting operators unfamiliar with local regulations, signage at launch points, beaches, marine mechanics, and marinas, and public information campaigns distributed through digital platforms and marine retailers. Education initiatives were generally viewed as most effective when combined with enforcement.

3.4 Exclusion Zones Near Beaches

Participants discussed the potential role of spatial safety measures, including Motorized Watercraft Exclusion Zones near high use beaches. Across engagement activities, participants noted that nearshore swimmer protection is an important safety objective and that any exclusion zones should be site specific, proportionate, clearly marked, and well communicated. Participants also emphasized that enforcement and jurisdictional coordination would be necessary, and that exclusion zones should complement existing navigation rules rather than replace them. A submission was also received suggesting Peter Street Basin as a potential location for an exclusion zone.

4. Overall Observations

Feedback gathered through the engagement process highlights strong interest in improving waterfront safety while maintaining responsible access to the waterfront for a wide range of users. Across engagement activities, participants generally supported:

- Strengthening enforcement of existing navigation rules
- Improving education and public awareness
- Considering targeted spatial safety measures near high-use swimming areas
- Clarifying regulatory roles and responsibilities

Participants also emphasized that any safety measures should be:

- Legally sound
- Clearly communicated
- Operationally feasible
- Fair to different waterfront user groups

The insights summarized in this report informed the development of the Personal Watercraft Safety Plan and recommendations that City staff have brought forward to City Council.