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NEWS

No swimming at the Saskatchewan Riviera: Sandbar magically appears on Prairie river, but having fun is a crime

Joe O'Connor May 23, 2012 – 11:03 PM ET | Last Updated: May 24, 2012 8:50 AM ET



Sun seekers flock to a sandbar in the South Saskatchewan River in the north end of Saskatoon. GREG PENDER / Postmedia News

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The sandbar appeared as if by magic, not overnight, but gradually over time, deposited by high water levels and the steady pulse of the South Saskatchewan River. It provided Saskatoon residents with a novel summertime perk, a sandy strip of riverside fun that attracted as many as 750 people a day during last summer's steamiest months.

Locals christened the sandbar "Saskatoon Beach." Beach umbrellas sprouted where none had stood before. Bodies got sunburned. Frisbees were thrown, splash fights were had and happy cries heard as Saskatonians picnicked, partied, felt the sand between their toes and relished their life at the beach — their very own beach, at the north end of

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THE LONG ROAD



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Spadina Crescent — instead of someone else’s beach at the terminus of a long road trip to the East or West Coast.

Alas, the beach party appears to be over for this Prairie town. Done in by city officials reluctant to formally recognize a sandy paradise citing public safety concerns, the shifting nature of sandbars and fears that lawsuits could potentially arise should a swimmer at Saskatoon Beach be swept away by the pull of the South Saskatchewan.

“No beach-blanket bingo going on there this summer,” Saskatoon city Councilor Darren Hill says. “It is not being closed, per se, the riverbank is still public property, and the citizens of Saskatoon are allowed to use that if they so choose.



Greg Pender / Postmedia News

“But it is some of the behaviour that goes with that that is illegal.”

He means the fun stuff. The stuff that people typically do at the beach on a hot and sunny day. For example: swim. In addition to barring swimming, there are to be no libations containing alcohol, no convenient parking and no portable toilets planted nearby for public use — an array of strikes against the giant sandbar that led one local wag to lament the city was willfully ignoring an urban “treasure” that, on summer days, resembles “a postcard from the French Riviera.”

Before their beach appeared, Saskatonians eager to enjoy the water could join the local canoe or kayak club, hike or bike or walk along the network of trails that run along the river or gaze down into its flowing waters from one of the city bridges spanning its reach.

Sand lovers, meanwhile, were forced to migrate further afield to one of two rural beaches, beyond the city limits. Cranberry Flats and Paradise Beach — a.k.a. Bare-Ass Beach — a clothing-optional stretch that attracts up to 300 sunbathers a day during the summer months.

“It’s a great place to just relax and be uninhibited,” one unnamed nudist told a reporter a few years back. “You can come down here, take your clothes off, eat your dinner and have a coffee.

“Just watch out for those horseflies. They bite.”

What bites in Saskatoon is the absence of a city-sanctioned beach and a city government with a sense of fun and understanding that not every citizen is a complete nitwit incapable of understanding the nature of risk. Some beaches



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are inherently dangerous, with riptides and undertows. The South Saskatchewan is a dangerous river, a swift-flowing beast.

Why not simply post some lifeguards and keep the beach party going?

“If you did formalize [Saskatoon Beach] and call it a beach there would be a need for lifeguards, and the kind of lifeguards that you need to lifeguard at a moving water beach need special certification,” says Susan Lamb, the chief executive of the Meewasin Valley Authority, the body responsible for managing the riverbank in and around Saskatoon. “It would be a real nightmare to try and staff it.”

The solution, instead, is to post some signs around the sandbar reminding locals that all swimming is prohibited. There will be a crackdown on illegal parking, littering and public drunkenness. Standing there and staring at the water will be allowed.

“Saskatoon Beach” will never be the same.

That could be a problem come mid-July. Environment Canada climatologists are calling for a long, hot, dry and sunny summer on the Prairies, featuring above average temperatures and multiple days where the thermometer could push past 30°C.

Hot. Dry. Sunny.

Sounds like perfect beach weather to me.

National Post

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J O E O ' C O N N O R

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9 minutes ago

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Rock Strongo

Typical nanny statists. If it's enjoyed by the majority, it must be banned.

7 hours ago 5 Likes

[Like](#)



wally_yyc

Really, you needed to post a map of Saskatchewan. I would hope even people in the centre of the universe (TO) know where Saskatoon is.

7 hours ago 2 Likes

[Like](#)



Free Bird

Great article! I can tell you that beach looks a lot nicer than the Lido outside of Venice. Yuck! They have a little paradise going there in Saskatoon.

7 hours ago 1 Like

[Like](#)



anon521481721

oh the nanny states directive, the local government should just back off. put up a "use at your own risk" sign, and give them some place to go to the wash room. how many days a year can people sun bathe in Saskatoon? just leave the good people of Sask. alone!

7 hours ago 9 Likes

[Like](#)



hmcse

Other than government run conservation areas, I can't remember the last time I was on a beach that wasn't "Use at own Risk" - no lifeguards. Not sure I see what the problem is here.

9 hours ago 5 Likes

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roughriders

and yet the first time someone gets dragged under by a fast moving current, you same pro-drowners would be belly aching about how your taxes went up when the family sues the city for a few hundred million, or how in the world did the city let this happen. I say go swim, but, when one of your friends dies, do NOT bellyache one second. Go bury the twit and get back to work.

9 hours ago 2 Likes

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CHaylock

I lived in Darwin, Australia for a while. The hazards on that urban beach included 5-metre salt water crocodiles, box jellyfish and bull sharks. Shifting sands? As if. Swim at your own risk.

9 hours ago 10 Likes

[Like](#)



Mashiki

Look on the bright side, in Canada you only need to worry about tetanus, glass, and rattlesnakes. And maybe a few spiders, not forgetting black flies the size of small dogs, and mosquito's which can drink a person dry in one go.

6 hours ago in reply to CHaylock 2 Likes

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Raynor

Let each to their own assess and assume their risks. Politically correct bureaucrats take the fun out breathing let alone life in general. Fun? The word has been removed from their dictionaries no doubt. This restriction is about as anti-Canadian and anti-humanity as one can get in respect to the little freedoms that one finds fun in places devils may fear to tread.

Put up your signs and shut up. Let people be to live their lives. Nobody ever asked the government to babysit us, it can hardly look after itself and stay out of trouble.

10 hours ago 13 Likes

[Like](#)



Mike L.

We have a beautiful river, South Saskatchewan River flowing through our beautiful city, not mentioning the roads which makes one think he is in Kabul, but that is a different rant.

You can tell something is wrong with Saskatoon when on a beautiful hot summer day 30C and you gaze upon the river from one of our many bridges, that link the East and West of the city, and you see maybe 2 speed boats or someone paddling a boat or board. Here we have an opportunity to make something of a beautiful river and we have nothing....no marina, no restaurants, no pubs where you can go and have a beer/meal....nothing...nada. A beautiful river that nobody really enjoys. There is a long, long bike path but at night you would have to take your life in your own hands to ride or walk along the path.....mugging, stabbings, etc. So the criminals can use the path at night but not good people...makes sense to me....open the riverbank to business so they can develop the riverband so that people can enjoy the beauty of the river....this will cause good people to frequent these establishments....and with this influx of good people,...

show more

12 hours ago 12 Likes

Like



anon980513459

Every year someone drowns at bareass beach, diving into what they think are pools. The currents in the river are incredible, and can be most treacherous when the melted snow from the mountains gets here usually in July when everyone wants to be having some fun.Or when the Gardiner dam is opened without warning.The city bylaw states "no swimming within city limits", but that doesnt mean you cant wade about...just look out for the drop-off, or say goodbye as you thrash around getting pulled under.. As usual though beaches like this are hijacked by the loud and obnoxious, who over imbibe and drop their litter wherever. Don't even think of taking your little kids there. The road next to the beach is a major north-south thoroughfare, with a designated bike lane, which is the only place to park.If the rowdies rode their own bikes there they wouldn't have a problem.This river is for fishing and boating , not for swimming, but tell that to some yahoo trying to impress his girlfriend.The police and fire services have more to do than pull bodies out.Tthe amount of grief involved is too difficult to deal with.

12 hours ago 9 Likes

Like



windy33

Only in Saskatchewan, you say, What a pity. lol horsefly comment right out the Saskatchewan down to earth redneck manual.

13 hours ago 4 Likes

Like



udhhdzettss

The nannies exist on the banks of the St Lawrence near Cornwall, Ontario, too. On a 100 yard gravel road leading to a beautiful 50 acre park with an actual sandy beach and a wide inlet of the river there are 13 signs telling everyone where to park, where to pee, where to sit and where to see. And there are concrete logs that try to keep cars and trucks out of the park.

The OPP keep busy on the roads, nevermind dad and the kids at the beach.

13 hours ago 4 Likes

Like



Skulldug

This isn't surprising if you know anything about Saskatoon. The nannies have been in charge there for ever. I used to go there to do a little shopping occasionally but stopped when they wouldn't let me have a smoke on the deck of my favorite pub. Their answer to anything risky or controversial is "ban it!".

13 hours ago 13 Likes

Like



P_L2

No one in the picture is swimming because the deepest is about knee high. Will the city outlaw getting your ankles wet? Why not spent a few grand on a rope fence at thigh level that has a warning - beyond here dangerous?

16 hours ago 12 Likes

Like



Carrie

Because the sand is always shifting. What may be thigh-high today may be a swirling whirlpool tomorrow.

10 hours ago in reply to P_L2

[Like](#)



StevenP

What is happening in Saskatoon is happening all over Canada, Dudes.

Little fairy prissy-panted bureaucracies are stifling the freedom of our fun loving, young bikini clad ninja turtle beach warrior friends. Let's call in student reinforcements from Montreal and retake the beach. **RETAKE THE BEACH.** From Dunkirk to Normandy, we will get it done. Beach freedom, emancipation of the young, a summer's day, we must have it. Get'er done.

16 hours ago 33 Likes

[Like](#)



zerozero

Christ, you can't even escape the nanny statism by going out west. This country is lame.

16 hours ago 39 Likes

[Like](#)



Hoser Riviera

- resembles "a postcard from the French Riviera."

Haha wow, now that is good humour.

16 hours ago 14 Likes

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