

Challenges to Reducing Winter Salt Use: Addressing Limited Liability in Ontario.



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Pristine Property Maintenance

June 24th 2025 @ 1-2:00pm

The Salting Paradox!

- People think salt keeps them safer, and then sue for tripping on salt!
- It also is destroying our infrastructure



- Environment Canada (2001). *Road salts have significant environmental impacts*
- Novotny et al. (2009). *Road salt impact on urban streams*

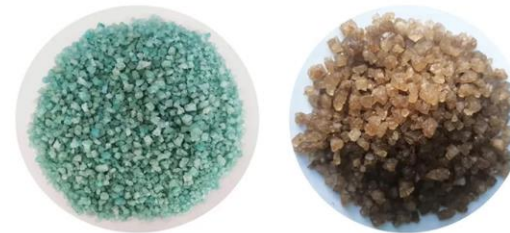
Salt Damage is Long Term, Not just Seasonal.

- Chloride Persists in soil and groundwater and leads to chronic stress for freshwater species like mussels- even when there is no visible damage (Burton et. Al. 2023).
- Spring melt delivers sharp pulses of Chloride, metals, PAHs into the environment (Popick et. Al. 2022)
- Environment Canada has called salt toxic for 25 years.



The Industry is **aware** that road salt creates long-term exposure. Some freshwater species are reacting biochemically to salt at levels we used to think were safe – and these aren't just lab findings – these are Ontario mussels in real water.

Spring melt is not gentle. This is why it is important for us to capture run off from storage piles. TO ensure we're basically not pressure washing salt into our rivers





But...



The challenge is not just awareness, it's a system that
Punishes Better Practices:

1. **Contractors are still held liable for slip and fall accidents**, even if they follow the presumed standard.
2. Insurance pressures and **legal ambiguity** push operators to “over apply” salt just to stay safe from lawsuits – which are traumatic for us too.
3. Clients expect Bare Pavement, clear of ice and snow **AT ALL TIMES** and there is **no protection for using less salt**, even if its better for the Environment and still keeps the property safe.

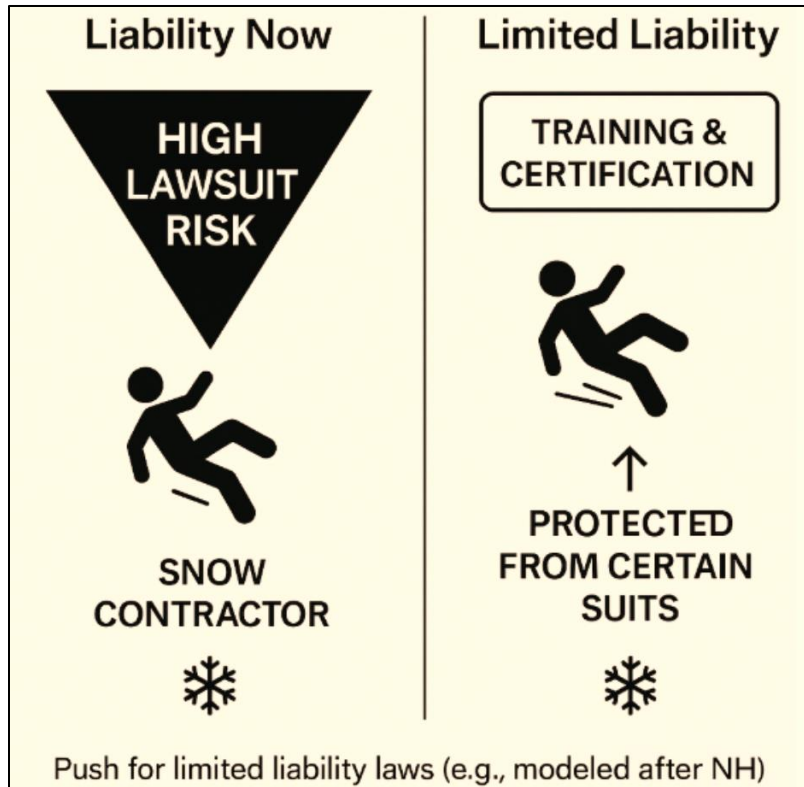


Regardless... we are not being



Winter Salt Management Program

- SMART ABOUT SALT
- BRINE, CALIBRATED SPREADERS, WEATHER DATA, GROUND TEMP, and SALT COUNTERS
- OPERATOR TRAINING AND DIGITAL LOGS



The goal:

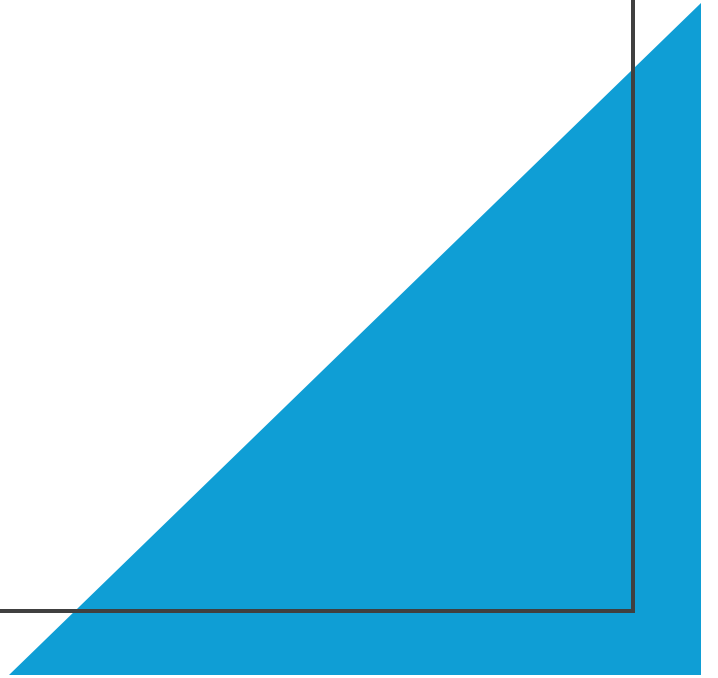
To align incentives with stewardship

The Power of Collective Action



Thank you!

- Questions?



References

1. Burton, E. A., Atkinson, B., Salerno, J., Khan, H. N., Prosser, R. S., & Gillis, P. L. (2023). *Lethal and sub-lethal implications of sodium chloride exposure for adult Unionid mussel species: Eurytnia dilatata and Lasmigona costata*. Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology, 85, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00244-023-01006-0>
2. Popick, H., Brinkmann, M., & McPhedran, K. (2022). *Traffic-derived contaminant loading in snow storage facilities during spring melt*. Environmental Science and Pollution Research, 29, 27875–27893. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-021-18340-2>
3. Natural Life. (2000, September/October). *Road salt is toxic, says Canadian government [Five-year study]*. Environment Canada. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/magazines/road-salt-is-toxic-says-canadian-government-five/docview/212919132>