



March 12, 2004

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT 2003

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receives this report for information.

DISCUSSION

Accomplishment Report 2003

Quality Programs and Services

In 2003, the Vancouver Park Board continued to provide a wide range of quality programs that enrich the lives of the city's residents. Delivered directly and through partners and affiliated groups, these parks and recreation programs played a major role in building healthy families, communities, lifestyles, environments and economy.

Day to day services include...

- **providing, maintaining and protecting parks and open spaces**, city-wide and for neighborhoods, as well as sports fields, play grounds and city beaches, golf courses, display gardens, and city boulevard trees and landscaping; promoting environmental sustainability and protecting wildlife.
- **providing and maintaining recreation, service and park facilities** such as community centres, rinks, pools, sport courts and fitness centres, food services in parks, field houses and athletic clubhouses, marinas, and special park attractions; maintaining its own work yards and office buildings.
- **providing leisure programs and services** including the development and delivery of instruction and programming for recreational, fitness and sport activities, support and facilitation of social activities, environmental education, community and public art programs, services for youth, children and seniors, and meetings and workshops in neighbourhoods; coordinating field, film and special event permits, public information and a variety of tourism related activities.

The Park Board system in Vancouver is large, diverse and popular. Residents enjoy more than 200 parks, 124 grass playing fields, 143 softball and baseball diamonds, 147 playgrounds, almost 200 tennis and sports courts, 18 km of beaches, nine indoor and six outdoor pools, 23 community centres and eight ice rinks.

In 2003, over four million visits were recorded to the beaches and outdoor pools; and over 200,000 rounds were played at our three public golf courses. During the year, a new system of tracking participation in community centres, pools and rinks was introduced, which will enable more timely recording of facility statistics. This data will soon be available on line, allowing staff and the general public to view usage trends with respect to individual facilities or city-wide.

Overview of 2003

2003 was a year of achievement and challenge for the Park Board. The many successes included brand new and newly restored downtown parks; expanded and renewed community facilities and infrastructure; more public outreach, information and accessibility; newly developed policies; better technologies and systems; and numerous arts and culture projects - all bringing improved and expanded parks and recreation services to Vancouver. The year was also unique in a number of ways. The fine summer weather resulted in record attendance at parks, beaches and pools, but had a severe operational effect across the system. In addition, a series of rotating encampments in city parks meant dealing with complex social issues, prompting near continuous media coverage and a high level of public involvement in parks and recreation matters.

This report highlights the key accomplishments, enhanced programs and new services of the Board, staff and partners in support of the Strategic Plan in 2003.

I. Programs and Services

Strategic Objective: Building a service focused organization

Accomplishments:

As part of our responsibility to promote healthy living, a continued focus was placed on servicing the open space, recreation and leisure needs of Vancouver's diverse population and on achieving excellence in programming particularly for families and youth.

New Special Events and Programs

The arts were alive and well throughout the Park Board in 2003 encouraging active communities. New collaborations with the **National Film Board and the CBC** developed to celebrate neighborhoods and cultures, with a showing of films in community centres related to Asian

Heritage Month and Vancouver's history as seen in archival film. The Vancouver Public Library selected Timothy Taylor's novel "Stanley Park" for its **One Book One Vancouver** program, with the Park Board and the Stanley Park Ecology Society participating in and producing a number of cooperative events in the park. The 2003 **Artists in Residence** program saw four residencies successfully completed in neighborhood facilities. For most of the year, parks along English Bay and Coal Harbour were enlivened with temporary public art installations through an **international sculpture** project sponsored by a local art gallery. Also in **public art projects**, a traditional native welcome figure was approved for the waterfront at Hadden Park, a piece approved for the seawall at Coal Harbour, and a cob house (earthen architecture) approved for installation in Stanley Park.

In keeping with the Park Board vision of providing high quality accessible recreation and leisure opportunities for all residents, a first annual city wide **Seniors Week** event was held, including Tea by the Sea and a dance at the Roundhouse Community Centre. Increased participation was recorded in **adaptive outdoor programs** including kayaking and golf for people with disabilities in partnership with service providers and volunteers.

Policy Reviews

Policy reviews were completed in a number of programs to better serve the needs of residents and focus the organization on achieving excellence in key service areas. Guiding principles for these policy evaluations included access and equality of service, program development, efficiency, diversity, partnerships and financial sustainability. The Park Board renewed its commitment to the arts with a review of the 1993 Arts Policy. A consultation process was held with stakeholders and partners, and research conducted into the field of community arts. The renewed **Arts Policy**, adopted in December, affirmed that the Board will continue its role in community cultural development and in collaborations which celebrate the arts in everyday life. A task force was established to review the 1989 Ice Allocation Policy and look at procedures for allocation of ice time and financial sustainability of Park Board rinks. User groups and employees were surveyed and best practices studied with a new **Ice Allocation Policy** approved in July. A further report dealing with recommendations on financial practices came forward in early 2004. A review was undertaken to update and consolidate special event policies and guidelines that direct decisions for special events and clarify procedures for organizers and stakeholders. Focus groups were conducted, a public opinion survey carried out and best practices studied from other cities. In November, the Board approved a new **Special Events Policy** and a Guide to Special Events was published to assist organizers in conducting successful events in Vancouver parks.

Resident and Visitor Communications

An expanded full colour **Leisure Guide** was produced incorporating the Annual Report. It featured the Park Board's urban forest program, and included schedules, maps and information on all major services. The Guide was published in August to increase public awareness, participation and support. A larger quantity was circulated through city facilities, community centres, libraries and schools with 40,000 dropped directly to households in selected areas of the city to promote local programs. An updated **Stanley Park Map and Guide** was produced and disseminated to meet the high level of tourism demand in the system's premier destination park. A completely redesigned and reorganized **public web site**, developed in house, went live in December providing a host of features. These included new graphics, expanded content and improved navigation - all to better showcase the scope, size and benefits of Park Board services and programs.

Hearing from Residents

Since 1997, the Park Board has had a **Dogs Off-Leash** program, under which there are 29 designated sites for dogs to be off-leash for certain times each day. Given the high degree of sensitivity and polarized views around dog off-leash issues, staff were asked to review the existing program, by testing public opinion and reporting back with recommendations on how the program could be improved. In June 2003, a survey measuring public opinion was completed and evaluations done of designated and non-designated sites to assess the extent of use and turf conditions. A report with recommendations to enhance the program came forward in early 2004.

To establish a baseline and **measure performance relating to service** in parks and recreation programs, a public opinion survey was carried out in November 2003. The purpose of the survey was to seek feedback from residents about their usage of Park Board services and programs, and their attitudes towards the Park Board's performance and benefits to the city. Keeping in mind these facilities as well as the Park Board's contribution to golf courses, street trees, park food services and sports fields, overall most residents feel that the Park Board is doing at least a good job in providing these services and amenities.

In October, the Park Board hosted a **Budget Open House** to give residents an opportunity to share their ideas about the 2004 Operating Budget. The budget process and priorities were presented and discussed. Attendees told the Board what they valued most and what changes or improvements they wanted to see in their city and neighborhood parks and recreation services.

Strategic Objective: Developing partner and stakeholder relationships

Accomplishments:

An emphasis was put on enhancing alliances, building new and innovative relationships and coordinating service with others, all to help achieve the organization's mandate. Users of our Park Board services and programs were encouraged to become active stakeholders, partners and stewards.

Recreation and Community Alliances

As a result of the community based approach to deliver Vancouver's **Emergency Social Services** (ESS) programs, a number of Park Board facilities are earmarked as safe havens for residents in times of emergencies. In 2003, nearly 450 registered volunteers participated in special events, training days, functional exercises and emergency operations centre activations. The disaster assistance team helped more than 100 residents find emergency shelter and clothing following fires. Thirteen ESS volunteers traveled to B.C.'s Interior to assist with managing response to the major forest fires in the summer. As part of the Olympic Youth Legacy Program for Sports and the Arts, sixteen **free skating** sessions were held for children and families over the school holidays in December at Vancouver's eight public ice rinks. The popular series, which attracted more than 6,000 skaters, also included various workshops, performances and artists. The Park Board and the Mount Pleasant Community Centre Association approved a building design program, based on feedback from residents, for the new **#1 Kingsway** community centre and library complex. A web site for the project was established including an e-mail feedback mechanism and architect's conceptual design presented at an Open House in July. A review of costing the proposal resulted in adjustments to better align with the building design programs.

Partnerships for Parks

The **ParkPartners** program continued to connect with local neighborhood groups and organizations to build and enhance park stewardship opportunities. Over forty partnerships have been identified or created since the initiative was launched two years ago, with 10 groups added in 2003. A series of staff and partner workshops was held which will form the basis of future work plans - to include a forum, web site, newsletter and idea fair. Through ParkPartners, a new **community garden in Stanley Park** was developed with local West End residents. The **Gifts for Parks** program received donations from individuals, businesses and organizations for the installation of 76 benches and six picnic tables, one drinking fountain and the planting of 11 trees to improve amenities for parks and beaches. A community based **Chinese Lunar New Year celebration** took place in February, a first time collaboration of the Friends of Victory Square, Downtown Eastside Residents Association, Carnegie Centre and Chinatown Revitalization Committee.

Increased Access

The Board re-established three **sub-committees** to report back to them on specific areas: Finance; Planning and Environment; and Culture and Recreation. The purpose of these committees is to allow for more extensive input, analysis and consultation with staff, subject matter experts, interest groups and the general public. A series of six **community Board Meetings** were held in various communities, to take decision making directly to Vancouver's neighborhoods. Park Board **meeting agendas** were prominently posted in special new frames at all recreation facilities around the city for increased public awareness. A **Mayor's Forum** on the Olympics was organized in February to hear the public's views on sustainable recreation legacies. The public was invited to see plans and share their ideas at a series of Park Board **forums and open houses** on various proposed projects including Synthetic Turf (determining site selection criteria), Quilchena Park (redevelopment plans review), South East False Creek (park design input), Kitsilano Beach Restaurant and Concession (management and operations plan review), #1 Kingsway (review of design plans) and Killarney Community Pool (design options).

Environmental Leadership

McCleery Golf Course joined Langara and Fraserview as the first municipal courses in the province to receive recognition by the Audobon Cooperative Sanctuary System of Canada as **Certified Audobon Sanctuaries**. This status is shared by only two other golf courses in British Columbia. Each of the Park Board courses worked through a long process to meet strict criteria including resource inventory and environmental plan, wildlife and habitat management, integrated pest management plan, water conservation, water quality management, and outreach and education.

The Park Board, in conjunction with the City's Engineering Services and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, implemented a **Mosquito Monitoring Program** for all City lands. Throughout the summer, potential habitats were mapped and sampled to determine what mosquitoes are found in Vancouver and where they breed. Based on those results, the West Nile Virus Surveillance and Mosquito Control Procedures for 2004 have been developed, focusing primarily on continued monitoring of populations and reducing breeding sites.

Further to the Park Board's long standing Integrated Pest Management Policy and the subsequent pesticide reduction strategy for the City of Vancouver, staff developed the **Pesticide Reduction Education Program** to show residents how to manage their lawn and garden pest problems through good horticulture and using biological and other non-chemical control methods. The program will be rolled out in 2004.

The Park Board led by example in its **response to severe summer drought conditions**.

Through a number of voluntary and creative measures, water use was totally restricted across the system except for maintaining major investments such as new plantings, special collections and sand based playing fields. These initiatives supported various measures already in place for more than a decade to reduce water consumption and make Park Board facilities self sustainable. The long drought also prompted staff to undertake special **fire preparation and prevention** activities to protect heavily wooded Stanley Park and Everett Crowley Park.

In its continuing commitment to environmental stewardship, the Park Board was actively represented on the **Cool Vancouver** Task Force. The group was established to assist the city (as a corporation and as a community) in the development of greenhouse gas reduction action plans. The goal is to reduce emissions by 20% by 2010. Park Board efforts will first focus on its buildings and fleet, the largest emitters. Recommendations for buildings include conducting audits and making energy saving improvements, while fleet initiatives will include downsizing and purchasing more energy efficient vehicles.

During the year, 3,200 **street trees** were planted by arboriculture staff to beautify Vancouver neighborhoods, bringing the total of trees in the urban forest to nearly 130,000. In addition, trees were planted along with hundred of resident volunteers in Everett Crowley Park in celebration of Earth Day and in partnership with the Kiwanis Club in Quilchena Park. At the Park Board's 20 acre Langley Tree Farm, operating costs were reduced by growing trees for other municipalities and for Greater Vancouver Regional District parks.

II. Parks and Recreation Facilities

Strategic Objective: Infrastructure renewal

Accomplishments:

The Park Board set goals to meet the challenge to renew large and small facilities and parks within the 116 year old system, and to achieve quality of service and cost effective operation.

Park Facility Upgrades

Community and Recreation Centre Upgrades

Community centres, offering both recreation and social services, are the focus of Vancouver neighborhoods, and operated in partnership with local community associations. An announcement was made in November for the Park Board to receive \$7 million for the replacement and relocation of **Sunset Community Centre**, one of the city's oldest. A grant of

\$4 million was approved under the Canada/B.C. Infrastructure Program with funding of \$2 million each from the Federal and Provincial governments; the City had already committed an additional \$3 million. The lobby and reception area upgrade was completed at **Kitsilano Community Centre** and expansion construction started at **False Creek Community Centre** for a new small gym and larger fitness centre. A former restaurant was converted to multi purpose space in a renovation and expansion at the **West End Community Centre**. The first phase of the aquatics renewal plan was commenced with the appointment of the architect for the new **Killarney Community Pool** and approval for the scope of major improvements to the **Renfrew Park Community Centre and Pool**.

Other Facilities

The redeveloped **Dr. Sun Yat Sen Gardens** courtyard was officially opened in a festive celebration with the Chinese community. A popular new waterfront restaurant, the **Mill Marine Bistro**, opened in Harbour Green Park overlooking the seawall.

New Parks

The May opening of the extension to waterfront **David Lam Park** featured a neighborhood breakfast in the park. The project includes tennis and basketball courts, plazas, a large children's playground and a new section of the seawall walkway. Vancouver's newest downtown green space, **Emery Barnes Park**, was dedicated in September with a community arts and entertainment event. This first phase includes flower beds, trees, shrubs and classic stone work along with a lively water feature. The park was named after the late Mr. Barnes (a long time community activist and politician) following a public process in which local residents were invited to submit their suggestions for naming the downtown south park site. The improved **8th & Fraser park** site features benches, new trees, a picnic area and pathways. Land was secured and stakeholder consultations held for a new downtown **street style skate park** to meet the growing demand from youth. Development of the new skate park is proposed on a trial basis.

Park Renewals

An elegant new **entry to Stanley Park** was completed as part of the major "S Curve" project, which featured more park services, increased safety, transit improvements and fewer environmental impacts. New features are a new bus loop for ecologically friendly trollies right in the heart of the park; return to park space of the old Chilco bus loop; sculpted pond and newly landscaped entrance way giving a softer transition from urban to forest; wider, higher and brighter pedestrian underpass to better accommodate buses and a variety of different users; and planting of an additional 240 trees. The first phase of the renovation of historic **Victory Square**, home of the Vancouver Cenotaph, was completed in time for the city's Remembrance Day celebrations in November. Improvements for the community include new lawns and pathways, benches, a staging area for performances, two entry plazas and additional lighting. The new playing fields at

Empire Bowl in Hastings Park were opened in June with a MoreSports youth soccer day. Redevelopment of the famous 5.5 hectare site provides additional sports facilities for the community - two soccer fields, two softball diamonds and perimeter granular pathway as well as a new field house. Newly restored historic **Thornton Park** was also opened in June with a special cultural celebration. The 80 year old ornamental park was upgraded to reflect its history, original design and architectural significance of the adjacent train station, while addressing increased pedestrian traffic and safety issues. Redevelopment work on East Vancouver's **Strathcona Park** was completed and includes a small skate park, new pathways, basketball court, baseball diamond, picnic tables and play areas. A number of changes were made to **Coopers' Park** on False Creek that enhanced the use of the park for local skate boarders and made the park safer for young children and their parents. Further upgrading was completed in **Heather Park** with improved drainage, play area and new plantings.

III. Future Financial Sustainability

Strategic Objective: Sound planning and practices

Accomplishments:

The Park Board sought to safeguard quality service delivery through careful planning and administration, financial accountability and a program of resource stabilization and diversification.

Financing Growth

In June 2003, Council approved the implementation of a City-wide "**Development Cost Levy**" or DCL, to offset costs of city population growth. By July 2004, after a one-year phase-in period, a charge of \$6.00 per square foot will be assessed on new development projects. The funds will be used to provide transportation services, social housing, daycare and parks to meet the needs of new residents and workers in the city. Forty two per cent of the funds received will go towards new park land acquisition and development.

Operating Budget Deficit

The Park Board is funded in part (38%) by revenues from operations and services and in part (62%) by the City of Vancouver through taxes. Revenue sources (amounting to \$31.1 million in 2003) included golf courses, parking, concessions, marinas, recreation (pools, rinks and other), VanDusen Garden and Bloedel Conservatory, and other. Revenue from the City amounted to \$49.8 million in 2003.

Park Board expenditures (\$81.6 million in 2003) were primarily to cover salaries, wages and benefits (66% of the total), with other expenses including supplies, equipment charges, utilities, contracted services and goods purchased for resale.

The challenge remains to manage and maximize resources, while trying to meet competing community needs with allocated dollars.

The Park Board had a **\$260,000 deficit** for the year ending December 31, 2003. This deficit, largely attributed to overages in utility charges, represented approximately ½ of 1% of the Board's net operating budget of \$49.8 million. Extensive staff efforts were made to balance the budget by year end. The City has agreed to absorb the deficit as the overages were the result of factors beyond the Park Board's control. Staff have looked at the root causes of the deficit and have specific plans in place to address the underlying issues for 2004.

(See 2003 Financial Tables attached in Appendix).

IV. Changing the way we work

Strategic Objective: Excellence in the workplace

Accomplishments:

Recognizing that staff is our greatest resource, the Park Board strove to fine tune the organization of services, improve the quality of life at work and increase workplace safety and security.

Employee Training

The Park Board continued to place a high priority on **employee training and career development**. Recognizing that a well educated and trained workforce is needed to remain competitive and provide the best possible service to residents, the Park Board supported and facilitated technical, professional development or other job related training opportunities for nearly 1,000 employees throughout 2003. A wide range of courses, workshops, conferences and seminars - on topics such as construction, purchasing, media, recreation, recycling, conflict resolution, time management, robbery prevention, order processing, photography, horticulture, planning and more - were signed up for by front line workers and senior management alike. Over 200 sessions were taken through the extensive 'City Learn' calendar. More than 500 employees received health and safety training. Two half-day **orientation sessions** were held for new employees to give them a unified vision of the organization. Sessions included interactive presentations on history, current issues, and employee roles and responsibilities.

Health and Safety Initiatives

The Occupational Health & Safety safety program continued to move forward in the **reduction of injuries** to staff. Compensable injuries in 2003 decreased by 16.4% compared to 2002. The Park Board was in the third year of the five year Workers Compensation Board Compliance Plan. Audits have been conducted in both Operations and Community Centres, and the target of 70% surpassed by achieving 87.6% compliance.

V. Awards

Vision: By the year 2005, the Vancouver, Board of Parks and Recreation will be recognized for its leadership, excellence and innovation.

Several of the Park Board's initiatives received special recognition through prestigious award presentations in 2003.

Vancouver's urban waterfront promenade won the Washington, D.C.- based Waterfront Center's **Excellence on the Waterfront Award**. Over 80 years in the making and the result of a cooperative planning process engaging citizens, the promenade (25 km when completed) provides public access to the water and connects neighborhoods. The Park Board and City were recognized for design, realization, and ongoing maintenance and operations.

Park Board staff played a key role in Vancouver winning a United Nations award for **Innovation in Public Service**, the only North American city to be so honoured. The accolade was bestowed for the Neighborhood Integrated Service Team (NIST) program, a unique initiative helping residents solve difficult issues in their neighborhood.

The new Stanley Park "S Curve" won an **Award of Merit** from the Consulting Engineers of British Columbia. The project was recognized for its high degree of technical design and construction difficulties.

The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects conferred their **National Merit Award** upon Durante Kreuk Ltd. for the Arbutus Walk project, a greenway running through a residential development linking Arbutus Street to Connaught Park. This 1.17 hectare linear space features a classic green, rose arbour, play grounds and sculpture fashioned from this former brewery location's giant vats.

The Park Board hosted British Columbia Parks and Recreation Association's **Annual Symposium**, with its theme of sustainability. More than 500 delegates from around the

province participated.

VI. Summary

In 2003, the Park Board continued its long tradition of serving residents through an expansive network of more than 200 parks and 40 major recreational facilities in the city. Throughout the very busy year, the Park Board worked hard with its community partners to meet the challenges and needs of a diverse and growing population. As champions of personal and community health and well being, and stewards of the environment, the organization remained committed to delivering customer satisfaction.

Key directions for the future will focus on further policy development and strategic prioritization in the area of sustainability as well as service improvement, particularly in rinks and pools.

Prepared by:
Corporate Services Division
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