



Date: June 29, 2012

**TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board**  
**FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: City of Vancouver Family Pass Lending Program**

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## RECOMMENDATION

*That the Board endorse participation in the City of Vancouver's Family Pass Lending Program in partnership with other community organizations, effective September 2012, as outlined in the attached Board Report.*

## BACKGROUND

Several cities across Canada (e.g. Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Victoria) and the U.S. have implemented pass lending programs to provide residents with access to cultural and recreational facilities/attractions, and informal learning opportunities in their communities at no charge. These pass lending programs have typically been organized and administered through the civic library system.

The idea of a culture and recreation pass for residents of Vancouver was raised during the civic election in Fall 2011. Comprehensive follow-up and exploration of the concept was initiated in March 2012 by the Chief Librarian at the Vancouver Public Library (VPL).

The Park Board was the first community organization to join the initiative and has provided significant input into the scoping of the program and contributed to the development of the proposed approach. Further, several Park Board services, namely recreation facilities, select horticultural attractions (VanDusen Botanical Garden and the Bloedel Conservatory), and pitch and putt golf courses, have been invited to participate in the program.

## DISCUSSION

### Context

Participation in cultural, recreational, and informal learning activities are important contributors to individual learning, sense of belonging, and social cohesion. The City of Vancouver has a number of community assets that provide such opportunities for the community at large, including public libraries, art galleries, museums, science centres, gardens, as well as many recreational facilities that provide opportunities for leisure, play, and interconnectedness. Some of these institutions are operated by the City, while others are run by allied organizations, many of which receive some level of funding from

the City. In addition, a number of important cultural and learning amenities are also located at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Of the aforementioned facilities/attractions, only the City's public library system provides free access to its resources, spaces, and programming. Participation at all other venues requires some form of admission fee or payment.

### **Focus on Families and Youth**

Many families and youth in Vancouver, both those living with low incomes and those with middle incomes, struggle with financially prioritizing and being able to afford the admission fees at many cultural, performing arts, and recreation venues. As a result, many families are excluded from these experiences and the many benefits that accrue from such participation.

### **Experiences in Other Cities**

As noted earlier, several large urban public library systems have established family pass lending programs, some on their own and some in conjunction with their respective cities. Hamilton Public Library, Greater Victoria Public Library, Ottawa Public Library, and Bibliotheque Municipale de Gatineau all operate pass lending programs, as do many large urban libraries in the U.S.

While the outcomes, benefits and issues for partner organizations in other Canadian cities vary, important common attributes include:

- All pass programs have been created for families (2 adults and up to 4 children); and
- The passes are very popular and reached maximum usage quickly after launch.

Participating organizations have also noted that the program provides a valuable opportunity for customer cultivation and awareness-raising. Others have made their passes available through libraries as part of their commitment to social inclusion and ensuring that less advantaged residents in their city have equitable access to venues, sometimes working in conjunction with community access programs already in place.

### **Objectives and Proposed Approach for the Vancouver Pass Lending Program**

The primary objectives of the City's Family Pass Lending Program are:

- To make Vancouver and nearby fee-based cultural, performing arts, recreational, and in-formal learning venues more accessible for Vancouver families and teens who are not able to financially prioritize visits to these venues;
- To showcase Vancouver's cultural, heritage, and recreation venues and performing arts organizations; and
- To increase participation in cultural, recreational, in-formal learning, and performing arts activities by Vancouver residents who have little or no participation at these venues.

The functional details of the program were developed in partnership with staff from several community organizations, including the Vancouver Park Board, Museum of Vancouver, Maritime Museum, Vancouver Bach Choir, Beaty Biodiversity Museum, and UBC Botanical Gardens. The key terms and conditions of the Family Pass Lending Program are outlined below:

#### Pass Scope

- Pass borrowers must be Vancouver residents and hold a valid VPL card.
- Passes will be valid at all participating venues and performing arts organizations.
- Pass borrowers may visit each participating organization at no charge once during the loan period.
- For performing arts organizations, some restrictions apply:
  - Participating organizations will determine how many seats per performance can be made available for pass borrowers; availability will be provided in groups of 6, although not all 6 tickets need to be signed out per pass.

#### Eligibility

- Each pass may be redeemed by up to six people:
  - Family (2 adults and up to 4 children under the age of 18); or
  - Teens (group of up to 6 teens between the ages of 13 to 18(must be at least 14 to borrow the pass)).

#### Loan period

- The loan period will be 2 weeks.
- Vancouver residents may place holds/reserves on passes via the library's web-based catalogue.

#### Availability

- 120 passes will be issued every 2 weeks (5 passes will be made available at each of VPL's 21 branches and 15 will be made available through Central Library).
- Passes must be picked up at the owning branch; they may not be transferred to other locations for pick-up.
- For performing arts organizations:
  - Pass holders must redeem their pass with the organization as per the rules of the organization; borrowers will be directed to check for details online.
  - Seats for performing arts organizations are available on a first-come first-serve basis.

#### Logistics

- Passes will include a list of all participating venues and organizations.
- VPL will provide passes to eligible borrowers with a 2 week loan period and due date.
- Borrower will present the pass, with identification (e.g. driver's license, school ID, library card, etc.).
- Venues will stamp passes to indicate redemption with their organization.

- Venues will record redemption data, which will be shared with the VPL for program analysis.
- Borrowers will be contacted for a post use survey.

Limits

- One loan per library card per year.

Participating Organizations

<b>Confirmed Participants</b>	
Bloedel Conservatory	Park Board Recreation Facilities (pools, fitness centres and rinks)
HR MacMillan Space Centre	Park Board Pitch & Putt Golf Courses
Maritime Museum	Vancouver Museum
Museum of Anthropology	VanDusen Botanical Garden

<b>Anticipated Participants Awaiting Confirmation</b>	
Beaty Biodiversity Museum	Vancouver Bach Choir
Vancouver Aquarium	UBC Botanical Gardens and Nitobe Japanese Memorial Garden
Vancouver Art Gallery	

<b>Additional Participants to be Approached in the Future</b>	
Alliance for Arts and Culture members	Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden
Ballet BC, Vancouver Opera, VSO	Telus World of Science

**Potential Community Impact/Benefits**

With 120 passes loaned every two weeks, it is anticipated that this initiative will provide approximately 18,720 caregivers, children, and teens with free access to important Vancouver and UBC facilities/attractions. Further, given that each pass may be used at up to 15 participating venues during the 2 week loan period, this initiative could provide users with over 280,000 opportunities to experience these community facilities/attractions. Assuming a very modest redemption rate of 50%, these figures demonstrate the tremendous impact and improvement in accessibility and inclusion that the Family Pass Lending Program will have for families and youth.

**Program Roles/Responsibilities**

Library

With 74% of Vancouver residents visiting public libraries annually and a network of branches located in all neighbourhoods across the city, the VPL is well positioned to reach a broad range of families and youth. Combined with its experience in lending materials/information, the VPL is uniquely positioned to manage the program's inventory of passes, control the distribution, and manage queues. The VPL will absorb the administration costs of this service into its regular operations.

### Participating Organizations

Each of the participating venues, including the Park Board, will provide access to their applicable facilities/attractions without financial offset.

### **Potential Risk**

The overall risk associated with this initiative is anticipated to be very low, however, there is the possibility of some potential revenue loss/dilution for partner organizations if paying customers to their facilities/attractions are converted into pass borrowers.

That said, the following program assumptions are anticipated to mitigate most, if not all, of the potential revenue loss/dilution:

- The approach/structure of the Family Pass Lending Program dissuades those with financial means from using the pass lending program (the fact that the pass must be obtained at the library, that it expires after a short period, and that there is no guarantee when the pass will be available is expected to deter people who have the financial ability to access these venues).
- The program is targeted at individuals that would otherwise not attend the participating facilities/attractions.
- This program complements other institutional community access programs (e.g., leisure access pass, free Tuesdays at the VAG, etc.).
- The social and recreational development benefits of this program will offset any potential revenue loss (based on the observations of libraries in other Canadian cities).

In order to ensure that the risk associated with any potential revenue loss/dilution is well documented and understood, the Family Pass Lending Program will be formally evaluated after Year 1 of its operation. Key activities integrated into the evaluation process will include:

- Collecting usage data at point of issue and at facility/attraction redemption locations; and
- Pass borrowers will be required to respond to a post-use survey.

### **SUMMARY**

Public library-based culture and recreation pass lending programs provide residents with access to cultural, recreational, and informal learning facilities in their cities. The passes are loaned at no charge through public libraries and are of short-term duration. Such pass lending programs are a creative way of providing families and residents who struggle with competing financial demands to participate in cultural and recreational activities that they otherwise would not normally have access to. Similar programs have been successfully implemented in other Canadian urban centres such as Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, and Victoria.

This project is congruent with initiatives that emphasize lifelong learning, social inclusion, teen and youth engagement, and represents a tangible program that supports the development of a learning city.

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