



Date: March 16, 2015

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
FROM: Director of Parks - Parks and Recreation  
SUBJECT: Parks Operations Services Review

---

## POLICY

At its regular meeting of February 16, 2015, Vancouver Park Board passed a motion to direct staff to develop a plan to identify needs and set temporary staffing levels to improve the care and appearance of parks and gardens city-wide for the 2015 spring and summer season; and that staff be directed to report back to the board by March 23, 2015.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information on plans that have been developed to identify and set temporary staffing levels to respond to fluctuations in seasonal maintenance requirements for 2015. In addition, this report provides: a brief summary of the Parks Operations context; an overview of the continuous quality improvements that Parks Operations is currently undertaking and; outlines the scope of the Parks Operations Services Review that is currently underway.

## BACKGROUND

Vancouver's parks and beaches offer a spectacular diversity of leisure, recreation and tourism opportunities for residents and visitors alike and are key reasons why Vancouver is regularly ranked one of the most liveable cities in the world. Parks also play an essential role in maintaining a healthy city, through facilitating social connections, civic engagement and providing the venues for physical activity.

The Park Board's Parks Operations group play an integral role in ensuring that these much-loved and enjoyed spaces are clean, well-maintained and safe. However Vancouver's parks system is expanding and increasing in complexity. New parks are being continually added to the inventory of spaces to be maintained; climate-change, increased tourism and population increase are all putting increasing pressure on parks. Maintenance and operations activities must evolve to meet the demands of this changing environment.

Parks Operations maintenance responsibilities are vast and varying as parks are home to the most diverse landscapes and activities in the City.

### Vancouver's Park System by Numbers

- 1,360 hectares (13.6 km<sup>2</sup>) of park land or about 10% of all land within the City's boundaries
- 229 neighbourhood parks
- 2 destination parks
- 1 botanical garden and plant conservatory

- 3 major golf courses and 3 pitch & putt courses
- 9 artificial turf fields
- 143,000 street trees and approximately 300,000 park trees
- 4 service yards
- 1 greenhouse operation
- 1 tree farm

## DISCUSSION

Although park maintenance is a year round requirement in Vancouver, with each season having its own list of maintenance conditions, there are two distinct peaks in our maintenance schedule. The greatest demand is during the growing season from the beginning of March to mid-August. During this season, turf grass is growing, the floral displays are changing and the weed growth is accelerating. It is also the period that sees the greatest numbers of park users. The second smaller surge is from mid-October to the end of November when the leaves start to fall and the summer displays are replaced with spring bulbs.

### Staffing Levels

Over the last 3 years, with these peak periods in mind and recognizing the importance of fiscal responsibility, Parks has adjusted the full-time and part-time staffing profile to more accurately match seasonal maintenance demands. Over the past four years, seasonal staffing levels for temporary and auxiliary staff have been increased year over year to address the seasonal maintenance demands. These staffing numbers are reflected in Figure 1 below.

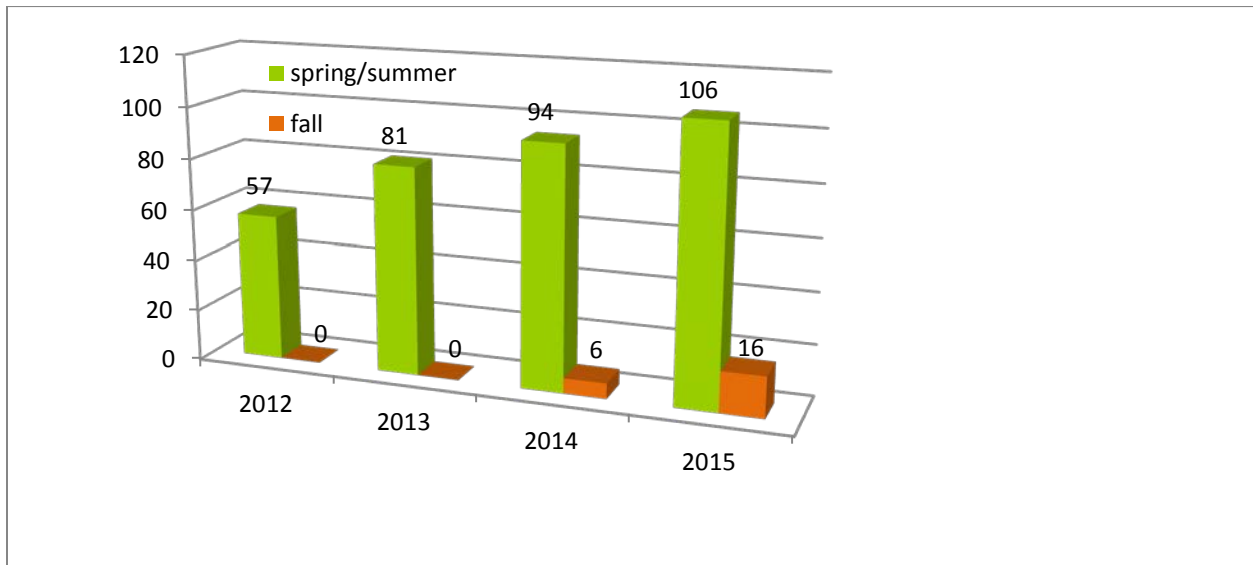


Figure 1: Seasonal Staffing Numbers 2012 -15 (Part-time + Auxiliary)

## Continuous Quality Improvement

As part of Parks Operation continuous quality improvements in all sections, for 2015 staff will be focusing particular attention to the following key areas:

- **Artificial turf field maintenance:** With the addition of Empire Bowl, the Park Board now maintains have 9 artificial turf fields. During May and June of this year the FIFA Women's World Cup will be utilizing both Trillium Park and Empire Bowl fields for practice and Operations staff need to be able to provide turf maintenance to ensure a high quality playing surface. A new artificial turf grooming machine has been purchased and the frequency of maintenance has been increased year-round to ensure that maintenance practices are meeting or exceeding manufacturer standards and users expectations.
- **Streets Horticulture:** As the contractor to City of Vancouver Engineering, Parks Operations maintains the large inventory of medians, traffic circles and bulges throughout the City. Staff are identifying priority areas for maintenance, including the city gateway plantings, and developing plans, schedules and staffing levels to improve the appearance and health of these plantings.
- **Demand Maintenance/Invasive Species Management:** A team of three regular full time and seasonal staff will be mobilized to respond to service requests where immediate action is required during the spring/summer season and continue the work on the eradication of invasive species such as Himalayan Black Berry in parks.
- **Tree watering:** Six seasonal staff will be hired to water trees planted on boulevards and naturalized areas in parks within the last two growing seasons to help ensure survival. Using trucks outfitted with water reservoirs and pumps, this work will be done from June to September. This will be of particular important this year with the warmer than usual winter, advanced growing season and decreased precipitation.
- **European Chafer Beetle Management:** The European Chafer Beetle infestation has resulted in significant damage to some turf areas in parks. Restoration work will be done from March to May and biological controls will be employed in late July where applicable.

## Parks Service Review

With the assistance of the Vancouver Services Review (VSR), Parks Operations is undertaking a Parks Operations Service review. The initial phase of the review consists of a current state operational assessment of Parks Operations that brings together horticulture, turf, urban forestry, general maintenance, major maintenance and streets horticulture. This process will include a full inventory of park assets and functions mapped via GIS technology, a leading practices review for parks for each of the six initiatives above, creating a future vision and defining core services for the Parks Operations division.

The Review will identify minimum performance standards and a Parks analytical data tool will be developed to refine work schedules to enhance resource optimization. A service-gap analysis on Parks performance metrics will be done to identify areas for action planning that will inform a key recommendations report.

Staff anticipate that the work required to undertake the Review will require the bulk of 2015 and plan to report back to the Board by the end of the current year.

## SUMMARY

Vancouver's Parks system is vast and growing. While Parks Operations have on-going optimization and continuous quality improvement plans in place, a comprehensive Parks Operations Services Review, completed by the end of 2015, will set standards and provide new tools to address the challenges of maintaining Vancouver's much-loved and world-class parks system.

General Manager's Office  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
Vancouver, BC

Prepared by:  
Dave Hutch, Manager, Research & Planning  
Brian Quinn, Manager, Park Operations