



Park Board General Manager's Report January 16, 2023

The following report is intended to provide an overview and update on recent and upcoming activities within the Park Board.

Polar Bear Swim

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation was happy to present this year's Polar Bear Swim, one of Vancouver's most beloved New Year traditions. This year's was the 103rd anniversary, welcoming over 20,000 participants watching and cheering on 6,164 registered swimmers taking their annual frigid dip in the waters of English Bay.

Vancouver's Polar Bear Swim is one of the largest and oldest in the world, and we're delighted to be able to continue to host such an important and fun community tradition. Indoor spaces were available including change and washrooms rooms, lockers, or warming tents.

The event ran from 12:30 – 4:00 pm, with the official swim at 2:30 pm. The Park Board Aquatic Services team plan, coordinate and manage the event to strict safety guidelines, providing on shore and on water lifeguards, first aid services and people management.

All registered participants receive a participation certificate, and following their swim, participants were able to receive a commemorative button, which continues to remain an important collector's item for many returning swimmers each year. In addition the New Year's Swim, Park Board Aquatic Services works with Business Development to include other fan favourites including live music and food trucks. Special commemorative merchandise was also available that included toques, T-shirts, sweatshirts and towels!

Park Board Communications supported the event with information bulletins and key safety messaging to participants on the affects of cold water swimming, hypothermia and the importance of support from family and friends.

The annual event started in 1920, with Peter Pantages and nine other brave swimmers starting their New Year in style by plunging into the chilly waters of English Bay. The group became known as the Vancouver Polar Bear Club. Since then, the swim has grown into a much loved highlight of the holiday season.

Park Rangers – Ongoing Support and Training

Park Rangers are the front-line ambassadors in Vancouver parks who support a broad range of events and activities. Currently, attention to people sheltering in parks and encampments takes up to 80% of their time. Some of the situations that Rangers encounter are mentally and emotionally challenging, and in some cases higher risk. We support our Rangers by offering a range of training and development opportunities, including recurring sessions called "Understanding Stress Injury and Personal Wellness" led by trained professionals. The Park Ranger team is aligned with VanPlay's direction on "Welcoming Everyone", by providing safe, clean and welcoming parks and recreation spaces.

Upcoming Council Business (related to or impacting parks & recreation):

There are no upcoming Council Reports of note for Parks & Recreation.



Board Briefing Memos and Emails: December 6, 2022 to January 16, 2023

Date	Topic
December 13	Ice Monitoring and Ice Guarding
December 13	2023 Park Board Chair and Commissioner Remuneration Expenses
December 15	Stanley Park Temporary Bike Lane Removal Update
January 11	9 O'clock Gun Update
January 11	RV Parking at Spanish Banks