



Report Date: July 11, 2024

VanRIMS No.: 08-3000-30

[Submit comments to the Board](#)

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: Director, Recreation Services
SUBJECT: Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities - Policy Update

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the permanent adoption of the Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities Policy which was in pilot status.
- B. THAT the Vancouver Park Board delegate authority to the General Manager to make any further decisions to alter, amend or suspend the Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities Policy as required.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This report seeks a decision on the Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities Policy pilot. The pilot was approved by the Park Board in April 2023.

The policy was developed with the goal of supporting staff to determine acceptable attire for swimming in public facilities. These concerns included whether certain attire would present a risk to patrons, impeding their ability to remain safe in the water and whether it would present a safety risk to lifeguards if a rescue was required.

BOARD AUTHORITY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

As per the Vancouver Charter, the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over all areas designated as permanent and temporary parks in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs and activities, fees, and improvements that occur within those parks.

On [April 24, 2023](#), the Park Board directed staff through an amendment to implement the Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities Policy (“the Policy”) as a pilot for one year, and that staff report back with findings from the pilot after that year.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The [BC Pool Regulation BC Reg 296/2010](#) (pursuant to the Public Health Act) came into effect on October 8, 2010, and was last amended on February 10, 2023. The BC Guidelines for Pool operations are designed to help operators and regulators interpret the Pool Regulation with respect to the operation of pools and generally accepted standards of safe practices.

The BC Pool Regulation does not currently reference any guidelines pertaining to bathing attire for patrons. The BC Guidelines for Pool Operations - “Signage and Pool Rules” states “Pool operators may consider posting additional rules they deem appropriate for their facility. These may include but are not limited to requiring clean and appropriate bathing attire as determined by pool management.” There is no definition to describe appropriate bathing attire for swimming in

the B.C. Pool Regulation.

In 2000 the BC Supreme Court decision [Maple Ridge v. Meyer, [2000] B.C.T.C. 367 (SC)] stood behind the right of females to be topless.

This Policy was developed to address staff concerns about patron bathing attire. The Policy was piloted for one year to assess its effectiveness before findings were to be presented to the Board to consider adoption.

DISCUSSION

Implementation and Feedback

Aquatic Services implemented the Policy by developing a training module with a staff working group and systematically integrating the Policy into various levels of training for front-line aquatic staff. The training took place at team meetings, in-services, and during new employee orientations and was well received by staff. Training also emphasized ensuring respect for all and reminded staff to be mindful of the diverse users that visit our facilities. Staff implemented the Policy pilot in July 2023 after training concluded.

To promote public awareness the policy was added to the [Guidelines for Visiting Our Pools](#) page on the Park Board Recreation website in July 2023, and information was disseminated through social media.

311 Feedback around “swim attire” from May 2023 to May 2024 showed one Recreation Feedback Case from 2023. The feedback was regarding topless females and consideration for the Park Board to mandate female patrons to cover their tops. During the same time, no other feedback was provided to staff through patron complaints about swim attire or the Policy.

Two-Spirit, Trans, and Gender Diverse (2STGD) community engagement sessions related to Park Board 2STGD Swims were held at the end of May 2023. The focus of the 2STGD engagement was program improvement. Although swim attire was mentioned by participants there was no direct reference to the new swim attire policy.

In a recent survey of the Park Board Aquatic Leaders, the majority of staff were happy with the current policy and in support of this becoming a permanent policy. Feedback from staff noted that the Policy allowed for the support of staff and clarity of messaging when dealing with attire questions or issues. Overall, staff have not articulated any major concerns with the Policy implementation and the rollout has been successful.

Considerations

There were concerns expressed at the Park Board meeting that the Policy would marginalize some groups; however, there has been no feedback indicating that this has occurred, or issues identified during the one-year pilot period.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Staff recommends that the Park Board approve the permanent adoption of the Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities Policy. Once approved, staff will be notified, and Aquatic Services will continue to embed the Policy into operational planning and practice.

APPENDIX A

Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities Policy


**VANCOUVER PARK BOARD
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

SUBJECT: Attire for Swimming in Public Aquatic Facilities	
CATEGORY: Recreation Services	POLICY NUMBER: <i>to assign</i>

PURPOSE

To set minimum expectations for appropriate and acceptable attire for swimming in Vancouver's public swimming facilities and to provide staff with a tool in carrying out their functions when in a position to administer this policy.

SCOPE

All Park Board staff and Aquatic facility patrons.

POLICY STATEMENTS**1. Key Principles**

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation welcomes participants of all ages, abilities, bodies, genders identities and expressions, religions, and cultures to our aquatic facilities. They are inclusive facilities and it is important that everyone is able to enjoy the facilities in a safe, welcoming and equitable manner.

Safe swimming is important to all of us. All participants are required to wear attire suitable for swimming in a public family aquatic environment that meets British Columbia Health Regulation and pool safety requirements.

Appropriate swimwear for swimming is defined as what other Canadians find as an acceptable level of tolerance in a family public swimming environment that includes maintaining full and appropriate coverage of genitals.

1.1 Appropriate attire for Swimming: Attire designed for swimming use such as,

- bathing suit,
- swim trunks, board shorts
- t-shirts, shorts
- burkini,
- swim hijab, leggings and tunic
- rash guard
- wet suit.

Appropriate swimwear allows the body to move freely, does not impede buoyancy and does not create an increased risk to the safety of the bather or lifeguard.

Attire for swimming must be clean, must not restrict movement or create a safety hazard, and cannot be clothing worn from the street or work-out into the pool.

1.2 Attire for swimming that is considered unacceptable includes, but is not limited to:

- Items designed for sexual/intimate purposes
- Clothing which absorbs water and becomes heavy such as jeans or sweatpants
- Attire with long/flowing fabric that may limit movement or cause a safety risk

In order to maintain water quality all participants are required to have control of their bladder and/or bowels. Items such as reusable or disposable swim diapers/pants are to be worn by individuals without sufficient control.

DEFINITIONS

Staff: an employee or contract employee of the City of Vancouver.

PROCEDURES

When administering this policy, staff must conduct themselves with decorum and with proper attention to the City's diversity. They must treat our patrons with respect at all times.

This means respecting the rights of other people, treating people with courtesy, in a fair and consistent manner and recognizing the different views that our patrons may have when choosing their attire for swimming.

REFERENCE

1. **B.C. Pool Regulation**, B.C. Reg. 296/2010 (pursuant to the Public Health Act) Signage and Pool Rules - Reference Section of BC Pool Regulation: Section 8
 - 1.1 Pool operators may consider posting additional rules they deem appropriate for their facility. This includes:
 - Requiring clean and appropriate bathing attire as determined by pool management.
2. **HUMAN RIGHTS CODE, BC Human Rights Act** – Duty to Accommodate
 - Section 8 - Discrimination in accommodation, service and facility

APPROVAL HISTORY

ISSUED BY: Recreation	APPROVED BY: Park Board	DATE:
AMENDED BY:	APPROVED BY:	DATE: