



August 29, 2025

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Director, Recreation Services

SUBJECT : **Swimming Supported by Parents – Update – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of the guidelines regarding private recreation use at Vancouver Park Board facilities and outlining how staff apply these guidelines. This information is being provided as a follow up to recent media coverage regarding the topic of parents providing swim instruction at our facilities.

Background

The Park Board regulates the use of parks and recreation facilities to maintain safe, and accessible spaces for the public. Under the private recreation activities guidelines, any individual or organization offering organized recreational services to clients on Park Board property is considered to be operating a business. This applies across a range of facilities, including pools, rinks, fitness centres, fields, and sport courts.

These guidelines do not apply to patrons in a familial relationship. It is perfectly acceptable to informally practice and aid in the development of safe swimming skills during public swim sessions, provided there is no disruption to other pool users and that access to any part of the facility isn't impacted. This is consistent with the approach taken by other municipalities in the Lower Mainland.

Staff have a long-standing practice of checking in with patrons about these guidelines and working with them to provide guidance and course corrections. Swimming carries more risk compared to other recreational activities, which is why proper instruction is crucial. Park Board swim instructors receive comprehensive training, which helps create a safe and supportive environment for learning an essential life skill.

Key Points Staff Use to Assess Private Recreation Activity in Pools

When determining whether an activity may be a private recreation activity, staff consider the following:

- Supervising adults must be in the water with the swimmer – not instructing from the deck.
- Patrons may not reserve space or disrupt general pool use.
- Informal practice is welcome, provided they do not interfere with others' enjoyment of the space.
- Indications that an activity may be a private lesson include:
 - Teaching structured drills or skill progressions
 - Instructing multiple participants



- Using teaching aids (e.g., kickboards, fins) in a lesson-style manner
- Collecting payment, promoting services, or recruiting participants

To ensure consistency while also supporting positive experiences, staff are advised to use discretion when applying these guidelines. Staff should consider the intent and nature of familial or social relationship interactions when determining whether an activity constitutes organized private instruction.

If staff believe guidelines are not being followed, they are required to:

1. Clearly and respectfully communicate the guidelines to patrons.
2. Document the situation if the concern escalates or persists.
3. Notify their direct supervisor for direction before taking further action.

This approach balances adherence to Park Board guidelines while ensuring a positive experience for all pool users.

Media Coverage

Park Board senior staff reached out to the patron highlighted in the recent media coverage to better understand their concerns and to identify opportunities for improvement. Park Board senior staff have also reinforced customer service expectations with on-site staff. The patron has been returning regularly to our recreation facilities since the original incident in May 2025.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Land".

Jessica Land (*she/her*)
Director, Recreation Services (Acting) – Vancouver Parks and Recreation

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
PB Communications