



June 12, 2019

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners
FROM : Malcolm Bromley, General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT : VCH Recreational Beach Water Quality Webpage – Board Briefing Memo

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to inform you about the updated recreational beach water quality web reporting tool recently launched by Vancouver Coastal Health. City Council is also receiving a briefing memo on this topic.

During the swimming season, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) reviews recreational beach water quality levels to ensure that water quality meets health standards for swimming or wading. VCH is the sole authority in ensuring Vancouver’s recreational beach water meets health standards.

VCH updated their beach water quality report webpage with a fresh new visually friendly look and an enhanced FAQ section to provide more robust background and information about water quality guidelines, sampling, analysis, and the risk assessment processes used by VCH. The new site also includes an interactive VCH - beach water quality map that provides current beach status of all monitored beaches in the VCH region, which are denoted with one of the following determinations:

Map Legend table with 6 rows: Open for swimming, Swim at own risk - beach water not sampled regularly, Swim at own risk - last sample over limit, resampling underway, Not suitable for swimming - advisory in effect, Not suitable for swimming - reference site only, No swimming - beach closed

Each beach icon includes links to supporting sampling results, which now include results from individual beach samples in addition to the 30-day geometric mean data previously shared. The inclusion of the individual beach sample results means that the most up-to-date beach sampling information will be available.

As individual water quality samples can vary widely, there is the potential for increased perception of worsened water quality conditions and additional attention from the public and media. There is also the potential for confusion about the different guidelines that apply to single



sample and 30 day geometric mean results and VCH responses to exceedances. For example, in the case of a single sample exceedance, the first step in VCH assessment is the taking of a re-sample. In situations where water quality does not meet recommended guidelines, an assessment is then made by the Medical Health Officer to determine beach status.

To proactively prepare and mitigate for potential heightened interest, Park Board staff are working with City colleagues from key departments including Communications, Engineering and Environmental Services. To date, efforts have included reviewing and providing input to VCH on the new webpage, and arranging a meeting with Park Board and City staff with the key external partners (namely VCH and Metro Vancouver who conduct the sampling), to align messaging and confirm lead agency responses to anticipated inquiries. Park Board and City staff are also continuing to work on a range of initiatives to improve water quality for recreational uses and ecological health.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm Bromley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Malcolm Bromley
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

/bf/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PB Recreation Leadership Team
PB Communications