



August 7, 2026

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Director, Recreation Services

SUBJECT : **Vancouver Park Board Outdoor Pool Operations Model – Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to respond to a Council enquiry regarding the Vancouver Park Board's current outdoor pool operating model, including its reservation system, and to outline alternative operating models, which may provide more flexibility, identified through a jurisdictional review of outdoor pool operations across the region.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Historical concerns

In 2018, Park Board staff began reviewing outdoor pool access processes to improve the equitable and safe use of outdoor pools. The historical model operated with a single session (no timed sessions) and drop-in only. Staff observations and patron feedback consistently identified several issues such as lengthy waits in queues, heat exposure during wait times, poor change room cleanliness and reduced turnover limiting access for some users due to extended stays by admitted patrons. These factors contributed to overall patron frustration, and incidents of aggressive or disrespectful behaviour.

Regulatory Considerations

In response to updates to the BC Public Health Act, an aquatic safety review was undertaken in partnership with the Lifesaving Society in 2018. As a result of this review, the lifeguard-to-swimmer ratio at Vancouver Park Board pools was revised from 1:100 to 1:60 to align with updated safety standards. This change did not reduce the aquatic facility capacity (what the pool can safely fit) levels; however, maintaining swimmer capacity (what the staff can safely supervise) requires additional lifeguard staffing. This change did not reduce the number aquatic facility capacity levels; however, maintaining the same swimmer capacity now requires additional lifeguard staffing. Staffing requirements are dynamic as they are also influenced by factors such as pool size, depth, design, equipment usage, the ability of patrons, weather conditions, and visibility. Under typical operating conditions, maintaining the same swimmer capacity now requires approximately 40-60% more lifeguard staffing. Staff continue to explore and implement measures to improve overall staffing availability in order to match staffing supply, which determines swimmer capacity, with demand trends.

PARK BOARD CURRENT OUTDOOR POOL OPERATING SYSTEM

Vancouver's outdoor pools operate in a unique context compared to most municipalities. Outdoor pools, such as Kitsilano, Second Beach and New Brighton, are destination facilities located on the waterfront, attracting visitors from across Vancouver, the Lower Mainland (note neighbouring municipalities of North and West Vancouver do not operate any outdoor pools), and tourists throughout the summer season. In addition, Vancouver's outdoor pools are generally larger than comparable outdoor pools in the region and offer longer daily operating hours, resulting in higher attendance volumes and more complex operational requirements.

Since 2023, Park Board staff have continually refined the outdoor pool operating model to address concerns previously mentioned under the historical operating model. Success is measured by balancing equitable access, customer convenience, operational efficiency, public safety, and facility utilization. Improvements have included the implementation of session times, extending operating hours, increasing the duration of public and length swim sessions, and adjusting the allocation of reservations and drop-ins in response to customer demand and operational experience.

Park Board outdoor pools operate using scheduled public swim sessions separated by transition periods and a hybrid admission model that combines reservations with drop-in admission. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the baseline capacity for each public swim session is made available through the Park Board's online reservation platform (Showpass) up to three days in advance, while the remaining twenty-five percent (25%) is reserved for drop-in admission. To support accessibility, patrons who are unable to access the online reservation system may contact Showpass by telephone to complete a reservation on their behalf.

Outdoor pool staffing levels are actively managed throughout the summer operating season to align with anticipated demand while maintaining safe operations. Park Board staff regularly review historical attendance data, reservation patterns, weather forecasts, seasonal trends, special events, and staff availability to develop and adjust daily staffing plans.

Since implementing the new operating model, staff have observed shorter wait times, improved cleanliness of changeroom facilities, reduced heat related medical events, and improved lifeguard working conditions. With very few instances of patrons being turned away due to capacity, or needing to wait extended lengths of time in queues – staff have balanced swim supply with observed demand.

ALTERNATIVE OUTDOOR POOL OPERATING MODELS

Critique of the Current Model

Staff continue to monitor the public dialogue regarding the operating model. While many who comment on observed flaws in the system link them to the reservation system – many of the concerns raised are more closely correlated with the shift to timed sessions – notably empty pools during cleaning/session turnover closures, lower usage at beginning and end of sessions, and longer lines ahead of the session start times.

Exploring increased Flexibility

Assessing alternative outdoor pool operating models based on flexibility is challenging. From a patron's perspective, flexibility can mean different things depending on what an individual values. For example, some express a preference to time slots as it creates greater turnover and predictable times allowing them more flexibility in how they plan their day/visits, while others prefer a single time slot so as to be able to show up at any time without worrying about their session being limited due to a session change over.

Timed Public Sessions

Based on a jurisdictional scan of regional municipalities (Appendix B), several alternative operating models may be considered. The review found that scheduled public swim sessions (time slots) are the predominant operating model across the Lower Mainland.



In most of these cases, time slots are limited to 90 minutes. As part of the Park Board's continual improvement efforts, staff responded to public concerns around flexibility and desires for spontaneity in summer 2025 by increasing outdoor pool length and swim sessions – which now are 180 minutes in length in most cases. The goal of this was to provide more flexibility for drop-in users to show up later in a timed session and still have sufficient time to enjoy the pool.

Admission Models – Reservation vs. Drop-In

Most municipalities operate timed public swim sessions on a first-come, first-served basis, while a smaller number of destination facilities combine timed sessions with advance reservations. Each model presents different benefits and operational considerations, and no single approach addresses all customer needs or operational requirements. Reservation models (or advance purchase) work best in services in which capacity is limited, demand often exceeds supply, and where predictability assists in staffing and resource planning. In the jurisdictional scan, newer destination style facilities, which often experience high demand, have adopted reservation models.

Summary

No operating model increases pool capacity at any given time. Regardless of the operating model selected, the maximum number of patrons permitted in the pool at any given time is governed by Vancouver Coastal Health requirements and Lifesaving Society standards regarding swimmer-to-lifeguard supervision ratios. While the operating model does not affect maximum capacity, it can influence patron access, usage patterns, and overall customer experience.

To inform operational adjustments made for the 2026 Outdoor Pool operating season, market research was undertaken late 2025/early 2026. This research was presented to Park Board at the March 30, 2026 meeting – [link](#).

Any operating model should aim to balance equitable access, customer convenience, operational efficiency, and public safety while ensuring compliance with established safety standards.

In addition to making adjustments to timed entry frequency/length, and reservation vs drop-in admission ratios, staff have been exploring technology solutions which could replace the reservation model with an electronic “wait-list” approach. More work needs to be done on this option including technology requirements, costs, and operational impact assessments.

Staff will continue to monitor the data and trends available to evaluate the current system in place.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SJ" followed by a flourish.

Steve Jackson
General Manager, Board of Parks and Recreation



Previous Memos

- [July 27, 2026 - 2026 Kitsilano Pool Operations](#)
- [March 26, 2026 - 2026 Outdoor Pools Operational Plan – Update – Supplemental Information](#)
- [March 18, 2026 - 2026 Outdoor Pools Operational Plan](#)
- [July 30, 2025 - Outdoor Pools Operational Changes](#)
- [June 24, 2025 - Outdoor Pools Reservation System](#)

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
PB Communications

Appendix A

Jurisdictional Scan Highlights

The jurisdictional review (Appendix B) demonstrates that there is no single operating model used by municipalities across the region. Municipalities have adopted approaches that reflect the characteristics and size of their facilities, operating hours, staffing models, community demand, and programming priorities.

Key observations from the jurisdictional review include:

- Vancouver Park Board provides the most total hours of outdoor public swim service among comparable municipalities (particularly on weekends and holidays). Most municipalities primarily only offer afternoon and evening public swims.
- Vancouver has one of the highest outdoor pool-to-population ratios in the Lower Mainland, with approximately one outdoor pool for every 151,000 residents, compared with many neighbouring municipalities that provide significantly more outdoor pool capacity on a per-capita basis
- Extended operating hours increase public access but require greater operational resources. Vancouver's level of service requires significantly higher staffing levels, operating budgets, maintenance activities, and lifeguard supervision throughout the outdoor pool season than jurisdictions with shorter operating schedules.
- Reservations are a demand management tool and are used at high-demand or destination facilities. The jurisdictional scan identified reservation systems at facilities such as Coquitlam's Mundy Park Pool (new facility) and Langley's The Outdoor Experience.
- Scheduled public swim sessions with session breaks are the predominant operating model across the region. Timed sessions provide opportunities to safely transition patrons, undertake routine cleaning and maintenance, provide staff breaks, and accommodate other aquatic programming throughout the day.
- Regional outdoor pools that don't have sessions for their public swims generally offer programming sessions prior/post public swim sessions.
- Swimmer capacity remains the primary operational constraint. Regardless of the operating model selected, all municipalities are limited by lifeguard supervision requirements. As a result, changes to operating models affect how available spaces are allocated rather than the total number of patrons that can be accommodated.

Appendix B Jurisdictional Outdoor Pool Operations

Only highlights outdoor public swim sessions

North Vancouver, West Vancouver and White Rock do not have outdoor pools

MUNICIPALITY	PUBLIC SWIM SCHEDULE
VANCOUVER	
Kitsilano	9:30am–12:30pm, 1:00–4:00pm, 4:30–8:30pm
Second Beach	8:00–10:00am, 10:30am–1:30pm, 2:00–5:00pm, 5:30–8:00pm
New Brighton	10:00am–1:00pm, 1:30pm–4:30pm, 5:00–8:00pm
Maple Grove	10:30am–1:00pm, 1:30–4:00pm, 4:30–7:00pm
Hillcrest	11:00am–7:00pm
SURREY Public Swim Schedule	
Bear Creek (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
Greenaway (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
Hjorth Road (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
Holly (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
Kwantlen (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
Port Kells (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
Sunnyside (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
Unwin (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00–2:30pm, 3:00–4:30pm and 6:30–8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:30–3:00pm and 3:30–5:00pm, 5:30–7:00pm
BURNABY	
Central Park (Sessions)	Mon to Sun: 1:00–5:00pm Mon to Fri: 6:00–7:30pm
Kensington Park (Sessions)	Mon to Sun: 1:00–5:00pm Mon to Fri: 6:00–7:30pm
Robert Burnaby (Sessions)	Mon, Wed, Fri to Sun: 1:00–5:00pm Tues/Thurs: 1:00–4:00pm Mon to Fri: 6:00–7:30pm

MacPherson	CLOSED - Water Leak
RICHMOND	
Steveston	Mon to Thur: 12:00-5:00pm Fri: 1:00-8:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:00-6:00pm
South Arm	Mon to Thur: 12:00-7:00pm Fri to Sun: 12:00-8:00pm
COQUITLAM	
Mundy Park (Reservation & Sessions*)	Mon to Fri: 9:00am–8:30pm Sat/Sun*: 11:00am–2pm, 2:30–5:30pm, 6:00–8:30pm
Eagle Ridge (Sessions*)	Mon to Fri*: 12:30– 4:00pm, 6:00–8:30pm Sat/Sun: 1:00–8:30pm
LANGLEY	
The Outdoor Experience (Reservation & Sessions)	Mon to Sun: 10:00am-12:30pm, 1:30-4:00pm, 5:00-7:30pm
AL Anderson Memorial (Sessions)	Mon to Fri: 1:00-4:00pm, 7:00-9:00pm Sat/Sun: 1:00-3:00pm, 3:30–5:30pm, 6:00–8:00pm
DELTA	
North Delta (Sessions on M/W/F)	Mon to Fri: 12:00-4:00pm Mon, Wed, Fri: 6:00-8:00pm Sat/Sun: 12:00-5:00pm
Ladner	Mon to Sun 12:00-5:00pm
NEW WESTMINSTER	
Moody Park	Mon/Wed: 1:30-7:00pm Tue, Thu, Fri: 1:30-8:00pm Sat/Sun: 12:30-7:30pm
Hume Park	Mon to Fri: 12:45-7:00pm Sat/Sun: 12:30-7:30pm
PORT COQUITLAM	
Centennial	Mon to Fri: 12:00-6:00pm Sat & Sun: 12:00-7:30pm
Robert Hope (Sessions)	Mon to Sun: 1:00-4:00pm, 5:00-8:00pm
PORT MOODY	
Rocky Point (Sessions)	Mon to Sun: 1:00–5:00pm, 6:00–8:00pm
Westhill Pool (Sessions)	Mon to Sun: 1:00–5:00pm, 6:00–8:00pm