
From: van Dyk, Donny
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 9:54 AM
To: Direct to Mayor and Council - DL
Cc: City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL
Subject: FW: 2026 Outdoor Lifeguard Service - Update - Board Briefing Memo

Dear Mayor and Council,

For your information, please see the email below and attached memo that was shared with the Park Board Commissioners this morning.

Thanks, DvD

Donny van Dyk (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

From: Park Board GM's Office <pbgmo@vancouver.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 9:46 AM
To: Park Board Commissioners - DL
Cc: PB LT (Leadership Team) - DL PB Communications <PB.Communications@vancouver.ca>;
Rowley, Cheryl <Cheryl.Rowley@vancouver.ca>
Subject: 2026 Outdoor Lifeguard Service - Update - Board Briefing Memo

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to update Commissioners on operational adjustments to outdoor beach lifeguard services for the 2026 summer season (Victoria Day – Labour Day). Park Board staff are providing this update to ensure Commissioners are aware of the context and rationale for the adjustment, should questions arise.

Background

In 2025, the Vancouver Park Board provided seasonal lifeguard services at ten beaches and five outdoor pools during the summer season. Staff have implemented a revised service model for the 2026 summer season which will see a transition from ten lifeguarded beaches to five. Lifeguard services will be provided at the following high-use locations: Jericho Beach, Locarno Beach, Kitsilano Beach, English Bay Beach, and Second Beach.

Decision Rationale

Lifeguard staffing allocations are being optimized to deliver services in our most active waterbodies and to outdoor pools to increase capacity levels this summer.



Park Board staff worked with the City's Strategy & Project Support Office (SPSO) to undertake a Core Service Review of the Outdoor Aquatics system. As part of this review, staff examined ways to align operations with available staff resources while maintaining safe and reliable aquatic services.

Service data shows that relatively few rescues or major aquatic safety interventions occur at lifeguarded beach locations during staffed hours. In addition, some beaches experience environmental conditions such as currents, colder water temperatures, water quality concerns or limited swimming areas that reduce overall swimming activity. Comparisons with other British Columbia municipalities also show that lifeguarded beaches are relatively uncommon, and where they do exist, coverage is typically more limited and focused on high-use locations. See appendix for highlights of stats and analytics informing the review.

Vancouver Park Board aquatic services function through two distinct staffing systems that reflect different operational contexts and collective agreements. In recent years, the Parks and Recreation system has experienced persistent lifeguard recruitment and retention challenges, reflecting broader provincial and national trends in the aquatic workforce. Unlike beaches, pools have a regulatory requirement to be lifeguarded year-round. Staffing beaches during the summer season draws from the same limited lifeguard workforce, resulting in reduced pool hours, program cancellations, and service disruptions at facilities that see significantly higher daily usage.

Given these factors, staff have reviewed options to rebalance resources in a way that prioritizes safety, equity of access, and fiscal sustainability.

2026 Operational Plan:

| Beach | Primary Rationale | 2026 Operations |
|--|---|---|
| English Bay | Busiest beach, iconic tourist attraction Central location with quality sand |  |
|  Second Beach | Pool-adjacent, facilitates efficient staffing Near play areas and designated picnic site | |
| Continue and Expand Kitsilano Beach | 2 nd busiest beach, iconic tourist attraction Pool-adjacent, facilitates efficient staffing | Designated swimming sites |
| Jericho Beach | Good water quality, few water hazards Near play areas and designated picnic site | |
| Locarno Beach | Good water quality, few water hazards Near play areas and designated picnic site | |


Self-Directed Model

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Trout Lake | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor water and sand quality Low swimmer usage |
| Sunset Beach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busy boating lanes Poor water quality |
| Third Beach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong currents and boating activity Low swimmer usage, inconvenient access |
| Spanish Banks East & West | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme low tide up to 1km affects lifesaving |



Focus on beach & sand sports: Repurpose sites for sand-based recreation and community activations (e.g., volleyball, fitness, events)

Public Safety Considerations

To support continued public safety across Vancouver’s shoreline, staff will implement several complementary measures, including:

- Enhancing public signage and water safety messaging at non-lifeguarded beach locations
- Continuing public education initiatives focused on ocean safety and responsible swimming

These measures are intended to ensure lifeguard resources remain concentrated at locations where they provide the greatest safety benefit, while supporting informed decision-making by beach users.

Next Steps

Park Board staff will finalize operational planning and continue working with staff for the 2026 summer season. Communications planning will also be developed to inform the public in advance of the summer season and provide clear information about beach safety.

Communication will be updated accordingly through regular communication channels, and further updates will be provided as they are available.

Please don’t hesitate to refer media inquiries to pb.communications@vancouver.ca.

Regards,

Steve Kellock (he/him)
Director, Recreation Services – Vancouver Parks and Recreation



March 18, 2026

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Director, Recreation Services

SUBJECT : **2026 Outdoor Lifeguard Service - Update - Board Briefing Memo**

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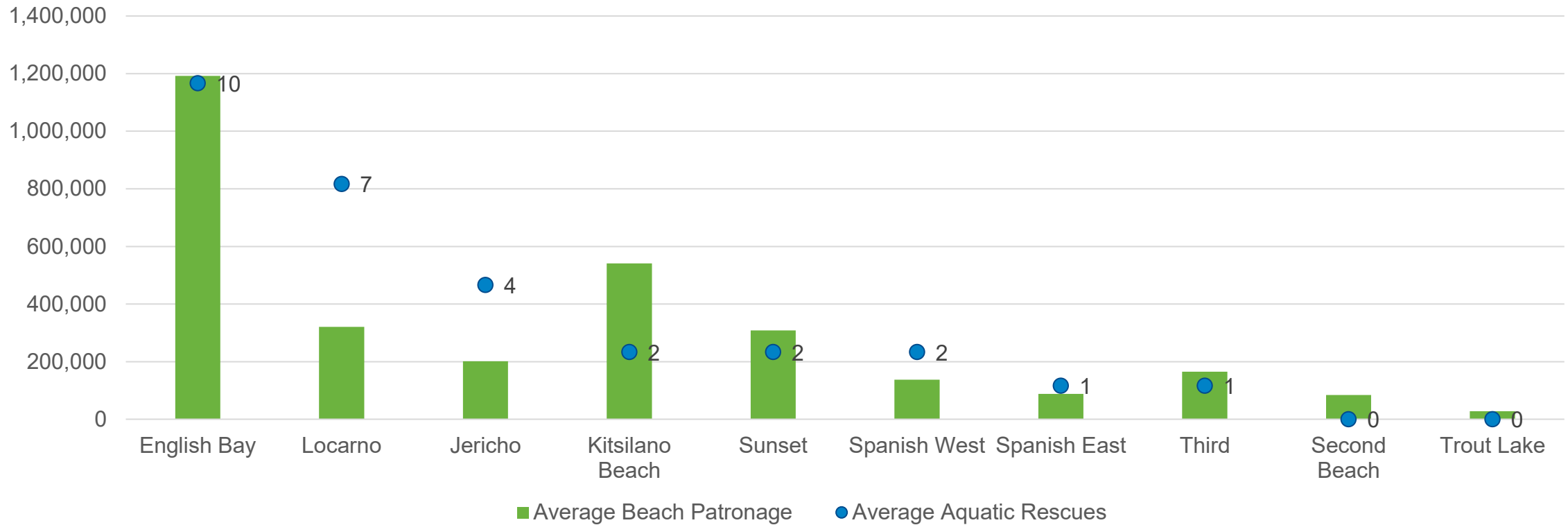
A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Steve Kellock (he/him)
Director, Recreation Services – Vancouver Parks and Recreation

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
PB Communications
City Manager's Office

Safety Context: High Patronage, Few Rescues

Beach Patronage vs. Aquatic Rescues (2023-2025 Average)



Jurisdictional Scan (BC)

| Jurisdiction | # of Beaches* | # of Guarded Beaches* |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Vancouver‡ | 10 | 10 [†] |
| West Vancouver | 5 | 2 |
| Surrey | 12 | 1 |
| Nanaimo | 19 | 1 |
| Kamloops | 3 | 1 |
| Burnaby | 1 | 0 |
| Richmond | 2 | 0 |
| White Rock | 2 | 0 |
| Tofino | 4 | 0 |
| Victoria | 10 | 0 |
| Harrison Hot Springs | 2 | 0 |
| Osoyoos | 6 | 0 |
| Penticton | 6 | 0 |
| Vernon | 36 | 0 |
| Kelowna | 37 | 0 |

Key Findings:

- Lifeguarded beaches are uncommon in other jurisdictions
- Staffed hours are typically lower.

Conclusion:

Fewer lifeguarded beaches would be consistent within a BC context.

*As listed by each jurisdiction

† Spanish Banks is listed as a single beach on the CoV website but is staffed operationally as two beaches (East and West).

‡ Wreck Beach is managed by Metro Vancouver and is not lifeguarded.