



December 18, 2023

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Tiina Mack, Director, Planning & Park Development

SUBJECT : **Alcohol on Beaches 2023 Pilot Update – Board Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

This purpose of this memo is to update the Board on the conclusion of the Alcohol on Beaches Pilot this past summer and to provide an overview the outcomes, challenges, and an update on next steps. In particular staff have found that significant additional resources for both Park Operations and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) would be needed to better support the operation and management of any continued consumption of alcohol on beaches in the future – in particular, English Bay and Third Beach during peak seasons for the reasons described below.

Background

On December 5, 2022, the Board directed staff via a motion to “pilot the responsible consumption of alcohol on an appropriate Vancouver beach or beaches where adequate facilities exist to support such a beach pilot program.” Following Board approval of the sites and program on April 24, 2023, the pilot launched to the public at seven (7) beaches from June 1 to September 4, 2023, including: Spanish Banks, Locarno Beach, Jericho Beach, Kitsilano Beach, Second Beach in Stanley Park, Trout Lake Beach, and New Brighton Beach.

Throughout the duration of the pilot, data was collected through a variety of means and is being analyzed to determine the challenges, issues, and successes of the Alcohol on Beaches Pilot. This includes sanitation and waste levels, visitor behaviours, lifeguard observations, VPD reported incidents and calls for service, and public feedback.

Preliminary Findings

While data is still being collected and analyzed, the level of success for the pilot overall ranged significantly based on location. Beach pilot sites in the west side of the city (Jericho, Spanish Banks, and Locarno beaches) were relatively low in effort to supervise and maintain by VPD, Park Rangers, Sanitation and Park Operations Crews. However, beach pilot sites further east and into the downtown area, resulted in a significant increase in operational and enforcement issues and challenges.

Further to this, English Bay and Third Beach were not included in the pilot program due to previous enforcement challenges during the summer months, and that there was no time to prepare renewed enforcement plans and add resources. However, given the seasonal popularity of these beaches as destinations for large gatherings, data was also collected at these locations.

Despite the exclusion of these two locations from the pilot, many beachgoers were observed illegally drinking here. This coincided with large crowds and behavioural incidents, resulting in the prioritization of Rangers and VPD resources at these locations to manage for safety and crowd



control. While other beaches officially designated for drinking operated with a “hands off” approach that entrusted visitors to self-regulate, English Bay and Third Beach required significant effort and management. In subsequent debriefing sessions, VPD officers compared the level of police personnel and resources required at English Bay to that of the Granville Entertainment District on weekends. Both locations also required a significant operational uplift to ensure beach cleanliness and sanitation standards were maintained given the increased litter and debris arising from the unsanctioned drinking.

Public confusion also contributed to the issues experienced at English Bay and Third beach this past summer. Noted by Park Rangers and VPD officers, a sizable portion of their time on-site included educating and/or reminding beachgoers that these two locations were not in fact part of the beach pilot, and that drinking remained illegal at these sites. To promote public awareness and support the efforts of enforcement staff, staff installed additional, larger signage and published further public reminders posted via the Park Board’s official social platforms.

Next Steps

Staff will be analyzing the data recorded through the and after the pilot on visitor behaviours, sanitation and waste levels through Park Operations monitoring surveys. Staff will also analyze public feedback through 3-1-1 logged reports for all beaches.

An internal engagement and review process is underway to analyze challenges and resourcing constraints experienced throughout the Park Board organization in the planning, implementing, and management of the Pilot. To understand public perceptions around drinking on beaches, who participated in the pilot and how it went, a Public Opinion Poll is being completed using statistically representative sampling of Vancouver and Metro Vancouver residents.

Continued alignment and partnership with VPD is a top priority and is essential to support any continuation of this pilot. In tandem with the above, staff continue to work closely with VPD as well as Park Rangers, Park Operations, Sanitation, Lifeguards, and others to quantify the significant resources needed to better support the operation and management of beaches in the future – in particular, English Bay and Third Beach during peak seasons. Findings from these next steps will inform a comprehensive report-back including potential operating budget implications to the Board targeted for the first quarter of 2024.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tiina Mack".

Tiina Mack
Director, Planning and Park Development

FM/ED/DS/
Copy to: PB Leadership Team
Author/Director Recreation, Director Parks, /project team
PB Communications