



July 5, 2021

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Donnie Rosa - General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **COVID-19 Seniors Support & Services – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of the various services and programming offered to support seniors during the pandemic that Park Board staff either facilitated or supported.

- 1) Early in the pandemic, recreation created Community Outreach Resilience and Activation (CORA), which had a sub-committee focused on seniors outreach. This group of Park Board staff called over 1100 seniors by phone to check on them. Staff asked the following questions and if additional assistance was requested, provided referrals to appropriate resources:
 - Do you have food, meds, and essentials?
 - Do you have friends, family, or neighbours who can help?
 - Did you want to connect to some resources virtually? (e.g., ABC fitness online, BC211, COV COVID-19 Impacts, Health Canada, SFU Star, Seniors First BC, etc.
- 2) PB staff ensured the Arts and Health: Healthy Aging through the Arts partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health continued programming during the pandemic (online).
- 3) Seniors programming (along with children and youth) was prioritized to return first when centres reopened in September 2020; this included programming such as hip and heart health classes, osteo fit, etc.
- 4) Staff assisted Community Centre Associations (CCAs) with the launch of prioritized seniors services such as food programs by ensuring COVID-19 safety plans were in place, with appropriate cleaning standards met and adherence to capacity limits was maintained, etc..
- 5) The Leisure Access Program office continued to process passes throughout the pandemic, supporting folks (many of whom are seniors) to have or maintain access to services.
- 6) When the April 2021 Provincial Health orders restricted drop-ins at pools, fitness centres and arenas, the Citywide recreation team offered a phone-in registration option (in addition to online) to ensure people who did not have online access or were not comfortable with technology could still register (often seniors or low-income patrons).
- 7) Community centres were activated as cooling centres during the extreme heat event in collaboration with CCAs. Many people who visited these centres were seniors.
- 8) Britannia, Kerrisdale, Ray Cam & Strathcona CCAs organized comprehensive outreach programs, food hampers, and basic supply kits for seniors who were facing isolation during the pandemic.



- 9) Park Board golf clubhouse staff were instrumental in the delivery of a food hamper program coordinate through City of Vancouver Community Services and BC Housing; clubhouse staff designed menus, sourced products, developed recipes, produced and packaged the meals. From April to June 2020, over 150,000 meals were prepared, and many of the recipients were seniors.
 - During the second wave (Oct 2020 – Feb 2021) a frozen meal program was developed for residents who were isolating, including many seniors; 38,000 meals were prepared.
- 10) Park Board golf courses were able to provide safe spaces for outdoor exercise opportunities, through rounds of golf or by using the paths surrounding the courses for nature walks (both popular activities for seniors). The Pitch and Putt courses were kept open all winter to also provide opportunities for safe socially distanced activity over the winter.
- 11) All 32 in-park community gardens remained open during the pandemic (with modified use rules) as they play a role in supporting access to food, nature and promoting positive mental health for many in the community.
- 12) Starting in 2020, [locally-grown produce from Sunset Nursery](#), VanDusen Botanical Garden, and the Fraserview and Langara golf courses has been donated to support community centre meal and hamper programs.
- 13) Space was provided at Pandora Park to support a community food market that provides fresh and affordable produce to the neighbourhood (which includes many seniors).
- 14) Environmental stewardship activities in parks support access to nature for people of all ages, including seniors and elders -- many in-park programs continued through the pandemic, with COVID-19 protocols implemented. Partner programs at several parks, including Stanley, Everett Crowley, Jericho, and Strathcona parks, provide important opportunities of inter-generational learning and transfer of knowledge about land and water stewardship.
- 15) Environmental Education was continued through the Park Board partner Stanley Park Ecology Society and programs continued to be offered online.

Staff continue to work with City colleagues, CCA's and partners to identify ways to provide ongoing support to the community, particularly those identified as most in need.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donnie Rosa".

Donnie Rosa (*they/she*)
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

/jl/sj/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PB Communications