



July 22, 2024

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners  
FROM : Steve Kellock, Director, Recreation Services  
SUBJECT : **VanSport Leagues – Update – Board Briefing Memo**

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Dear Commissioners,

This memo provides the Board with an update on the VanSport initiative, including the direction for the VanSport League component.

**Background**

The VanSport Leagues initiative was discussed through the Park Board over the past few months, as Volleyball BC highlighted concerns regarding the impact of the Park Board initiating directly operated leagues. This concern began as Park Board staff informed Volleyball BC they would pilot Volleyball as the first Park Board directly operated sports league. The advancement of the directly operated sports league would reduce historical permit time from Volleyball BC sports leagues, raising concerns about the impact on their programming.

After further review, staff committed to pausing any VanSport League rollout until 2025 while reviewing options that would best meet community sport and Park Board objectives. Since that time, staff have met with Volleyball BC to identify options that benefit all parties.

This update provides an overview of VanSport, a summary of the meetings with Volleyball BC, and a recommended pathway for proceeding with VanSport Leagues.

**Structure**

VanSport, or the Vancouver Sports Services staff team, aims to deliver recreational sport programs, leagues, and sport resources. VanSport is grounded in best practices through the [Sport for Life Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity model, a National framework that guides the delivery of physical activity and sport services across all ages, stages, and abilities.](#)

Where Community Centre Associations (CCA’s) offer their indoor sports programming, VanSport initiatives are Park Board’s directly operated programs and services that strive to address gaps and promote sport access for local residents of all ages interested in sports and physical activity in both indoor and outdoor environments.

VanSport has 3 components:

Programs	Leagues	Resources (Online)
Registered or Drop-In Programs	Registered programs	Safe Sport
Entry level	Entry level	True Sport



All ages	Adult oriented	High Five
i.e. Pickleball, Skateboarding, Tennis	Pilot sport - Volleyball	Long-Term Sport Development
		Sport/Physical Activity Resources
		Partner Resources (i.e. Viasport)

**Programs** – Park Board directly operated sports programs that are currently offered include Pickleball and Tennis at several indoor and outdoor facilities. In 2023 there were 2,708 participants (Pickleball Open Play 1,505, Pickleball programs 640 and Tennis lessons 563). Staff continue to deliver these services annually and will expand based on facility availability and operational capacity.

**Resources** - The VanSport resource page will be publicly available online. It will be continually updated to provide comprehensive and relevant sports resources for the community. Based on use and participant feedback, staff will refine and monitor this page.

**Leagues** - VanSport Leagues were identified as an opportunity to meet community sport needs and Park Board objectives. Leagues were intended to launch in Q2 2024 with Volleyball as the pilot and other sports considered after a review of the pilot.

The VanSport League model was developed with several community sports and Park Board objectives identified including:

- Deliver strategic recreation objectives as outlined in [VanPlay](#) (i.e. enhancing access to sport and recreation – financially, demographically, and geographically);
- Provide an opportunity to generate increased revenue for the Park Board by leveraging recreation infrastructure, as highlighted in the “Quick Wins” section of the [Board-approved Think Big strategy](#);
- Address identified issues around asset management and maintenance of Park Board infrastructure;
- Address identified issues around commercialization and unauthorized use of Park Board infrastructure.

Staff reviewed operating models and determined the most effective way to meet these objectives is to deliver league play directly. To facilitate the introduction of the league while maintaining public access times, a decision was made to reduce permit time on one evening at one location which affected one traditional permit client. Although it only represented a small percentage of their total permit allocation for the year, the permit holder expressed their concerns which led to pausing the implementation of the league for one year to give staff more time to explore other options.

## Model Comparisons

For review, the service delivery model comparisons are listed below:

### Direct Operated

Benefits	Challenges
Meets Think Big objectives (maximize revenue)	Competes with existing leagues delivered by sport organizations
Meets VanPlay programming objectives	Requires more staff planning/admin resources
Oversight of infrastructure	Risk/Liability assumed by Park Board
Potentially lower cost to participate	The potential program is unsuccessful
Consistent approach for all sports leagues	
Reduce unauthorized/commercialization of public assets	

### Contractor

Benefits	Challenges
Work collaboratively with organizations	Lower revenue generated by the Park Board (contractor split)
Reduce Park Board staffing capacity requirements	Potentially higher cost for participation
Many sports leagues are already being offered, no need to displace existing leagues	Maybe an inconsistent approach in League delivery over time (some contracted, some direct)
Possibility to delegate risk/liability	
Less confusion for the public around various league options	

### Volleyball BC Meeting Update

As Volleyball was the pilot for sports leagues, and to address concerns raised by Volleyball BC, several productive and collaborative meetings with Volleyball BC have occurred to inform an updated proposed direction for sports leagues.

During meetings, Volleyball BC staff shared various issues and objectives associated with delivering VanSport Leagues and listened to concerns about how directly delivered sports leagues would impact the community-delivered program. Park Board staff proposed the concept of pivoting from directly operated leagues to a process where interested proponents could deliver leagues that meet mutual objectives on behalf of the Park Board (contractor model). Through this reassessment, staff are now moving forward toward logistical implementation.

### League Model: Pathway Forward

Staff have developed an updated model, with feedback from a key community sports organization (Volleyball BC) and will prepare to issue a request for proposals (RFP) from interested proponents to deliver a VanSport Volleyball League in suitable locations where volleyball sport leagues are



currently permitted across the City. The RFP will consider Park Board programming objectives and community feedback. Consistent with established contract arrangements, staff will recommend a 70% (contractor)/30% (Park Board) revenue split aligned with other contracted services across the system.

Examples of how organizations would benefit from this model include ensuring their programming and sports development objectives are met, generating reasonable revenue, leveraging Park Board’s marketing capacity and registration process, receiving maintenance and equipment to ensure optimal sports environments, and from a time-guaranteed partnership with Park Board to ensure continuity of league operations.

If no proponents are interested in operating or reasonably meet the set forth evaluation criteria, staff would consider direct operation for that given sport.

Staff are developing the RFP criteria for Volleyball leagues and plan to issue it for public consideration in Q3 2024. This would likely result in Leagues commencing in mid-2025. Based on the outcomes of the RFP and assessment of the initial sports league, staff will assess whether the contractor delivery model should continue for other sports leagues.

**Financial Implications**

In general, revenue generated through the Park Board Leagues would be allocated towards:

- Staffing to monitor the intended use of Park Board assets
- Maintenance and operational costs associated with aging infrastructure
- Replacement equipment cost
- Contribute to centralized Recreation revenues, used to offset costs in other areas

Revenues would increase as the Park Board would consider expanding leagues to other sports.

Below is a sample of how pivoting to a contractor model would compare to direct operation in a year if all volleyball league permits (Volleyball BC/Urban Rec) were converted.

**Total Revenue Comparison:**

Revenue Type	Amount	Notes
30% Park Board Revenue Split	\$147,500	Annual projection based on existing permits
Registration fees	(\$19,000)	New expense
Existing Annual Volleyball League Permit Revenue	(\$54,500)	Replace with contractor split (top line)
Total Park Board Annual Revenue Projection	\$74,000	Revenue split – expense – existing permits



<b>Total Estimated Park Board Revenue Annual <u>Increase</u> for Volleyball Leagues</b>	<b>\$19,500</b>	Represents the net annual increase
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### Summary

Developed through feedback shared by a permit holder, this revised approach to sports leagues should meet the Park Board and community goals. Once initiated, the Sport Court strategy, as recommended in VanPlay, and the continuing development of the Think Big Strategy will help further shape how sports service and sport infrastructure are delivered across the Park Board network. In the interim, staff appreciate collaborating with Volleyball BC and other interested proponents to advance sports leagues and sports service delivery.

Staff endeavour to ensure that sports users ultimately benefit from the best possible sports and sports league experience offered by the Park Board and other organizations.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line.

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

Copy to: LT – Leadership Team  
PB Communications