



## REFERRAL REPORT

Report Date: September 2, 2025  
Contact: Chris Robertson  
Contact No.: 604-873-7684  
RTS No.: 16473  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: September 16, 2025

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability in consultation with the General Manager of Development, Buildings and Licensing and the General Manager of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: Enabling Outdoor Cold Plunges and Saunas – Amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law and Licence By-law

### ***RECOMMENDATION TO REFER***

THAT the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability be instructed to bring forward the by-law amendments as described below and that the amendments be referred to Public Hearing together with the recommendations set out below;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the necessary Zoning and Development By-law and Licence By-law amendments, in accordance with the recommendations set out below, for consideration at the Public Hearing.

### ***RECOMMENDATION FOR PUBLIC HEARING***

- A. THAT Council approve, in principle, the application to amend the Zoning and Development By-law to update Beauty and Wellness Centre regulations to allow for outdoor cold plunges and saunas, generally in accordance with Appendix A;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to bring forward for enactment amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law, generally in accordance with Appendix A.

- B. THAT Council approve, in principle, amendments to the Licence By-law to remove the steam bath licence category and regulations, and amend the Beauty and Wellness Centre definition to include thermal therapy, generally as presented in Appendix B;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to bring forward for enactment amendments to the Licence By-law, generally in accordance with Appendix B.

- C. THAT Recommendations A and B be adopted on the following conditions:
- (i) THAT passage of the above resolutions creates no legal rights for any person, or obligation on the part of the City and any expenditure of funds or incurring of costs is at the risk of the person making the expenditure or incurring the cost;
  - (ii) THAT any approval that may be granted following the public hearing shall not obligate the City to enact any by-laws including zoning by-laws; and
  - (iii) THAT the City and all its officials shall not in any way be limited or directed in the exercise of their authority or discretion, regardless of when they are called upon to exercise such authority or discretion.

### ***REPORT SUMMARY***

This report proposes amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law and the Licence By-law in response to the June 26, 2024 Council motion instructing staff to explore further opportunities to allow outdoor cold plunges and saunas in the city. Currently, cold plunges and saunas are only permitted in some zones and are not generally permitted outdoors. The proposed by-law amendments will expand potential locations by allowing them outdoors, and in all commercial and industrial zones.

### ***COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISION***

On [June 26, 2024](#), Council approved a motion directing staff to bring forward amendments to allow the operation of outdoor cold plunges and saunas, and to engage with Vancouver Coastal Health to request the health authority develop an appropriate regulatory framework for enabling outdoor cold plunges and saunas.

### ***CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS***

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

### ***REPORT***

#### ***Background and Context***

There is growing interest in contrast therapy, which involves alternating between hot and cold temperatures, for health, therapeutic, and wellness purposes. This technique includes cycling between heat (or thermal therapy) in a sauna or warm/hot water, and hydrotherapy and cold via water, ice, or snow. The practice has historically existed in many cultures, with Nordic sauna culture often cited as a reference, and there has been recent interest to access outdoor cold plunging and saunas in Vancouver.

In the Zoning and Development By-law, cold plunges and saunas are currently permitted in most commercial and some industrial zones, and in some of these district schedules, can only be indoors. Since cold plunges and saunas are an emerging business type for the city, they have been placed into different land use categories depending on the permitted use in the zone and the nature of the business operation. The Licence By-law includes dated language for “steam baths”, and the existing regulations do not reflect emerging business operations, which emphasize the use of saunas and steam baths facilities that focus on wellness experiences and promote social activities.

To enable outdoor cold plunges and saunas in more zones in the city, staff engaged with the industry and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). This engagement provided important understanding of the regulatory framework, approval processes, and approaches that informed the draft by-law amendments.

## ***Strategic Analysis***

### ***Discussion***

To allow outdoor cold plunges and saunas, staff are proposing to update the Zoning and Development By-law and the Licence By-law. These regulatory amendments will clarify and modernize the by-laws, support consistent application of the rules and regulations across commercial and industrial district schedules, and create pathways and opportunities for various cold plunge and/or sauna operations and businesses.

### ***Proposed Zoning and Development By-law Amendments***

Staff conducted regulatory research and analysis, sought industry feedback, and consulted with VCH to inform the development of the by-law amendments. One of the key findings of the industry engagement (see section below) was that there are varied business types and operations. The proposed zoning regulations provide flexibility by allowing the use in more zones to accommodate a range of business types.

The proposed Zoning and Development By-law amendments are as follows:

- **Revise the Beauty and Wellness Centre definition to include thermal therapy.** Hydrotherapy already exists in the definition and the addition of thermal therapy would clarify that cold plunges and saunas fit under this use.
- **Add “Beauty and Wellness Centre” land use, limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy (i.e. cold plunge and saunas), to 12 industrial district schedules** where this use is not currently permitted.
  - Permit this use within a building and/or outdoors in industrial areas. For example, the cold plunge and/or sauna might locate outside of an existing business as an accessory use to another business, such as a wellness centre located within a building.
- **Allow “Beauty and Wellness Centre” to be permitted outdoors** by removing restrictions on uses that must be contained within a building.

The proposed updates to the Zoning and Development By-law will create a pathway for cold plunges and saunas on both private property and in parks, and allow them to be indoor and/or

outdoor. Amending the “Beauty and Wellness Centre” definition to add “thermal therapy” would enable saunas/cold plunges, and make it clearer to administer. No additional zoning changes are needed to allow cold plunges and saunas in a park. See Appendices A and C for more details.

### ***Licence By-law***

The proposed updates to the Licence By-law would:

- **Remove current regulations pertaining to the Steam Bath** (Section 28.6) **licence category**, as the existing regulations are outdated and do not align with the current business practices, supporting businesses with the flexibility to determine their operations.
- **Amend Beauty and Wellness Centre definition to include thermal therapy.** By doing this, all saunas and cold plunges will be included within the Beauty and Wellness Centre licence category.

Should Council approve these amendments, the updates would modernize the Licence By-law, result in alignment between the licence category and the Zoning and Development By-law land use category and emphasize the use of saunas and steam baths facilities that focus on wellness experiences and promote social activities. See Appendix B for more details.

### ***Permits and Approvals (Private Property and Parks)***

Should Council approve the amendments, the by-law updates would allow indoor and outdoor cold plunge and/or saunas on both private property and in parks. Permitting approvals for private property and parks are administered differently (see below for more information on approvals processes), depending on where a business intends to locate.

1. Private property process: Businesses on private property would follow the standard permit process and approvals which requires a Development Permit, Building and Occupancy Permits, and a Business Licence. Other permits, such as electrical and fire, may be required on a case-by-case basis. VCH review and permits would also be required as a separate, non-City of Vancouver review.
2. Park process: Parks and Recreation staff are exploring options to add these uses to parks under the jurisdiction of the Park Board. The Park Board may initiate a public bid process, inviting prospective applicants to submit their proposals for consideration. The successful applicant(s) will be notified, required to obtain the necessary permits and Business Licence from the City of Vancouver and complete contract negotiations. The contract will be for a set term. A separate review and permit(s) are also required from VCH as a non-City of Vancouver review. In parks that are not under the jurisdiction of the Park Board, the typical permits and Business Licence processes would apply.

### ***Industry Engagement***

Industry engagement was conducted through an online survey and a Question and Answer (Q&A) session. See Appendix D for the engagement summary.

1. **Online Survey:** In May 2025, an online survey was sent to 27 members of the cold plunge and/or sauna industry, with 21 responses received. The intent of the survey was to engage with industry members/ representatives and business owners/enquirers to understand their interests, challenges, business models and opportunities for regulatory improvements. The key conclusions from the survey were that there was a diversity in how and where

businesses intend to operate, and the majority of businesses were interested in locating in parks, while a smaller number were considering locating on private property.

- 2. Question and Answer Session:** In July 2025, an on-line Q&A session was held. Thirty-eight invites were sent and 25 cold plunge and/or sauna industry members/representatives and business owners/enquirers participated. Staff shared the proposed draft regulatory and licence changes and outlined the permitting processes for input and feedback. Vancouver Coastal Health also attended to present their regulatory approach and to answer questions.

The proposed by-law amendments and information were well received, with questions generally focusing on the details related to the open bid process for proposals on parks and beaches, the proposed regulation timelines, by-law compliance, and VCH-specific requirements.

### ***Vancouver Coastal Health Input***

Per Council Direction, staff coordinated with Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) to understand their regulatory framework and approval process for outdoor cold plunges and saunas. VCH also presented and answered questions at the July 2025 Q&A Session with industry. See Appendix E for VCH's presentation "Regulatory Administration of Cold Plunges and Pools".

Cold plunges and saunas are subject to Provincial regulations that are administered by Vancouver Coastal Health. New cold plunge facilities are regulated under the BC Pool Regulation and considered a pool unless they are drained, cleaned, sanitized and refilled after each use before they are used by another individual. In response to the emerging cold plunge operations, VCH has prepared a draft guidance document "Guidelines for Cold Plunge Pool", for designers and operators to help interpret the BC Pool Regulation in relation to cold plunge pool design and operation. Further, VCH has requested clarity and direction from the Ministry of Health around regulating cold plunges, and continues to advocate for updates to modernize the existing regulation, while also actively working with other health authorities to strive for a consistent approach throughout the Province.

### ***Financial Implications***

Consistent with other development applications, businesses would be required to obtain the necessary permits and Business Licence and would be subject to the applicable permit and licence fees.

Development Cost Levies (DCLs) would continue to apply to any outdoor cold plunge and/or sauna based on the proposed floor space indicated on a development permit. If the application is for a new structure that will be on-site for less than 12 months, it would qualify for the nominal DCL rate for temporary structures (\$10 per building permit). The City is currently reviewing its development contribution tools and will be bringing a revised development contribution framework, including new and updated rates and policies, to Council in Q2 2026.

### ***Legal Implications***

If enacted, the proposed amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law and Licence By-law will allow for outdoor cold plunge and saunas in accordance with the regulations, and are attached as Appendix A and B.

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**APPENDIX A**

**DRAFT By-law to amend the Zoning and Development By-law No. 3575  
regarding cold plunges and saunas**

*Note: An amending by-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.*

1. This by-law amends the indicated provisions of the Zoning and Development By-law No. 3575.

2. In section 2, in the definition of “Beauty and Wellness Centre”, Council adds “thermal therapy,” after “hydrotherapy.”.

3. In the I-1 district schedule, Council:

(a) in section 2.1:

(i) strikes out “2.2.8”, “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, and “2.2.12” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, “2.2.12”, and “2.2.13”, respectively, and

(ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:

“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1, 2.2.8”; and

(b) in section 2.2:

(i) in section 2.2.1(a), adds “beauty and wellness centre,” before “cardlock fuel station”,

(ii) rennumbers sections 2.2.8, 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 2.2.11, and 2.2.12 as 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 2.2.11, 2.2.12, and 2.2.13, respectively,

(iii) in sections 2.2.11 and 2.2.12, strikes out “2.2.9” and substitutes “2.2.10”, and

(iv) adds a new section 2.2.8 as follows:

“2.2.8 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

4. In the I-1A and I-1B district schedules, Council:

(a) in section 2.1:

- (i) strikes out “2.2.8”, “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, and “2.2.12” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, “2.2.12”, and “2.2.13”, respectively, and
    - (ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:  
  
“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1, 2.2.8”; and
  - (b) in section 2.2:
    - (i) in section 2.2.1(a), adds “beauty and wellness centre,” before “cardlock fuel station”,
    - (ii) rennumbers sections 2.2.8, 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 2.2.11, and 2.2.12 as 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 2.2.11, 2.2.12, and 2.2.13, respectively,
    - (iii) in sections 2.2.11 and 2.2.12, strikes out “2.2.8” and substitutes “2.2.10”, and
    - (iv) adds a new section 2.2.8 as follows:  
  
“2.2.8 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.
5. In the IC-2 district schedule, Council:
- (a) in section 2.1:
    - (i) strikes out “2.2.8”, “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, and “2.2.11” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, and “2.2.12”, respectively, and
    - (ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:  
  
“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1, 2.2.8”; and
  - (b) in section 2.2:
    - (i) in section 2.2.1(a), adds “beauty and wellness centre,” before “cardlock fuel station”,
    - (ii) rennumbers sections 2.2.8, 2.2.9, 2.2.10, and 2.2.11 as 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 2.2.11, and 2.2.12, respectively,
    - (iii) in section 2.2.11, strikes out “2.2.9” and substitutes “2.2.10”, and
    - (iv) adds a new section 2.2.8 as follows:

“2.2.8 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

6. In the FC-2 district schedule, Council:

(a) in section 2.1:

(i) strikes out “2.2.8”, “2.2.9”, and “2.2.10” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, and “2.2.11”, respectively, and

(ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:

“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1, 2.2.8”;  
and

(b) in section 2.2:

(i) in section 2.2.1(a):

(A) renumbers clauses (i) through (xiv) as (ii) through (xv), respectively, and

(B) adds a new clause (i) as follows:

“(i) beauty and wellness centre,”,

(ii) renumbers sections 2.2.8, 2.2.9, and 2.2.10 as 2.2.9, 2.2.10, and 2.2.11, respectively, and

(iii) adds a new section 2.2.8 as follows:

“2.2.8 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

7. In the I-2 district schedule, Council:

(a) in section 2.1:

(i) strikes out “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, and “2.2.12” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.11”, “2.2.12”, and “2.2.13”, respectively, and

(ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:

“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1, 2.2.10”; and

(b) in section 2.2:



- (i) rennumbers sections 2.2.10, 2.2.11, and 2.2.12 as 2.2.11, 2.2.12, and 2.2.13, respectively, and
- (ii) adds a new section 2.2.10 as follows:  
“2.2.10 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

8. In the IC-3 district schedule, Council:

- (a) in section 2.1:
  - (i) strikes out “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, “2.2.12” and “2.2.13” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.11”, “2.2.12”, “2.2.13” and “2.2.14”, respectively, and
  - (ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:  
“Beauty and Wellness Centre      Conditional      2.2.1, 2.2.10”; and
- (b) in section 2.2:
  - (i) in section 2.2.1(a), adds “beauty and wellness centre,” before “cardlock fuel station”,
  - (ii) rennumbers sections 2.2.10, 2.2.11, 2.2.12, and 2.2.13 as 2.2.11, 2.2.12, 2.2.13, and 2.2.14, respectively,
  - (iii) in section 2.2.13, strikes out “2.2.11” and substitutes “2.2.12”, and
  - (iv) adds a new section 2.2.10 as follows:  
“2.2.10 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

9. In the I-3 district schedule, Council:

- (a) in section 2.1:
  - (i) strikes out “2.2.12”, “2.2.13”, and “2.2.14” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.13”, “2.2.14”, and “2.2.15”, respectively, and
  - (ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:  
“Beauty and Wellness Centre      Conditional      2.2.1, 2.2.12”;  
and

- (b) in section 2.2:
  - (i) in section 2.2.1(a), adds “beauty and wellness centre,” before “gasoline station”,
  - (ii) rennumbers sections 2.2.12, 2.2.13, and 2.2.14 as 2.2.13, 2.2.14, and 2.2.15, respectively, and
  - (iii) adds a new section 2.2.12 as follows:

“2.2.12 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

10. In the I-4 district schedule, Council:

- (a) in section 2.1:
  - (i) strikes out “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, and “2.2.12” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, “2.2.12”, and “2.2.13”, respectively, and
  - (ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:

“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1, 2.2.9”;  
and
- (b) in section 2.2:
  - (i) rennumbers sections 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 2.2.11, and 2.2.12 as 2.2.10, 2.2.11, 2.2.12, and 2.2.13, respectively,
  - (ii) in section 2.2.12, strikes out “2.2.10” and substitutes “2.2.11”, and
  - (iii) adds a new section 2.2.9 as follows:

“2.2.9 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

11. In the M-1B district schedule, Council:

- (a) in section 2.1:
  - (i) strikes out “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, and “2.2.11” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.10”, “2.2.11”, and “2.2.12”, respectively, and
  - (ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:

“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1, 2.2.9”;  
and

(b) in section 2.2:

(i) renumbers sections 2.2.9, 2.2.10, and 2.2.11 as 2.2.10, 2.2.11, and 2.2.12, respectively, and

(ii) adds a new section 2.2.9 as follows:

“2.2.9 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

12. In the IC-1 district schedule, Council:

(a) in section 2.1:

(i) strikes out “2.2.7”, “2.2.8”, “2.2.9”, and “2.2.10” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.8”, “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, and “2.2.11”, respectively, and

(ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:

“Beauty and Wellness Centre                      Conditional                      2.2.1., 2.2.7”; and

(b) in section 2.2:

(i) in section 2.2.1(a), adds “beauty and wellness centre,” before “cardlock fuel station”,

(ii) renumbers sections 2.2.7, 2.2.8, 2.2.9, and 2.2.10 as 2.2.8, 2.2.9, 2.2.10, and 2.2.11, respectively,

(iii) in section 2.2.10, strikes out “2.2.8” and substitutes “2.2.9”, and

(iv) adds a new section 2.2.7 as follows:

“2.2.7 Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.

13. In the M-2 district schedule, Council:

(a) in section 2.1:

(i) strikes out “2.2.8”, “2.2.9”, and “2.2.10” wherever they appear and substitutes “2.2.9”, “2.2.10”, and “2.2.11”, respectively, and

- (ii) adds the following use in the correct alphabetical order under the heading “Service Uses”:  

“Beauty and Wellness Centre	Conditional	2.2.9”; and
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  - (b) in section 2.2:
    - (i) renumbers sections 2.2.8, 2.2.9, and 2.2.10 as 2.2.9, 2.2.10, and 2.2.11, respectively, and
    - (ii) adds a new section 2.2.8 as follows:  

“2.2.8	Beauty and Wellness Centre is limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy.”.
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14. In section 2.2.1(a) of the I-1C district schedule, Council adds “hydrotherapy, thermal therapy,” after “aircraft landing place,”.
15. In section 2.2.1 of the HA-2 district schedule, Council:
- (a) renumbers subsections (c) through (h) as subsections (d) through (i); and
  - (b) adds a new subsection (c) as follows:  

“(c)	hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.
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16. In section 2.2.1 of the HA-3 district schedule, Council:
- (a) renumbers subsections (d) through (k) as subsections (e) through (l); and
  - (b) adds a new subsection (d) as follows:  

“(d)	hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.
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17. In section 2.2.1 of the RM-5, RM-5A, RM-5B, RM-5C and RM-5D districts schedule, Council:
- (a) renumbers subsections (d) through (j) as subsections (e) through (k); and
  - (b) adds a new subsection (d) as follows:  

“(d)	hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.
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18. In section 2.2.1 of the C-1 and RM-6 district schedules, and the HA-1 and HA-1A districts schedule, Council:
- (a) renumbers subsections (e) through (k) as subsections (g) through (l); and
  - (b) adds a new subsection (e) as follows:

“(e) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

19. In section 2.2.1 of the C-2B district schedule, Council:

- (a) renumbers subsections (f) through (m) as subsections (g) through (n); and
- (b) adds a new subsection (f) as follows:

“(f) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

20. In section 2.2.1 of the C-2C district schedule, Council:

- (a) renumbers subsections (f) through (l) as subsections (g) through (m); and
- (b) adds a new subsection (f) as follows:

“(f) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

21. In section 2.2.1 of the C-2 and C-3A district schedules, Council:

- (a) renumbers subsections (g) through (q) as subsections (h) through (r); and
- (b) adds a new subsection (g) as follows:

“(g) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

22. In section 2.2.1 of the C-2C1 district schedule, Council:

- (a) renumbers subsections (g) through (n) as subsections (h) through (o); and
- (b) adds a new subsection (g) as follows:

“(g) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

23. In section 2.2.1 of the C-5, C-5A and C-6 districts schedule, Council:

- (a) renumbers subsections (g) through (m) as subsections (h) through (n); and
- (b) adds a new subsection (g) as follows:

“(g) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

24. In section 2.2.1 of the C-7 and C-8 districts schedule, Council:

- (a) renumbers subsections (f) through (o) as subsections (g) through (p); and
- (b) adds a new subsection (f) as follows:

“(f) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

25. In section 2.2.1 of the FC-1 district schedule, Council:

(a) renumbers subsections (g) through (p) as subsections (h) through (q); and

(b) adds a new subsection (g) as follows:

“(g) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

26. In section 2.2.2(c) of the MC-1 and MC-2 districts schedule, Council:

(a) renumbers clauses (v) through (xi) as clauses (vi) through (xii); and

(b) adds a new clause (v) as follows:

“(v) hydrotherapy, thermal therapy, or both;”.

27. A decision by a court that any part of this By-law is illegal, void, or unenforceable severs that part from this By-law, and is not to affect the balance of this By-law.

28. This by-law is to come into force and take effect upon enactment.

ENACTED by Council this                      day of                      , 2025

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Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

**APPENDIX B**

**DRAFT By-law to amend the Licence By-law No. 4450  
regarding cold plunges and sauna**

*Note: An amending by-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.*

1. This by-law amends the indicated provisions of the Licence By-law No. 4450.
2. In section 2, Council:
  - (a) in the definition of Health Enhancement Services:
    - (i) strikes out “or steam bath”, and
    - (ii) strikes out “, Health Enhancement Centre and Steam Bath” and substitutes “and Health Enhancement Centre”;
  - (b) in the definition of Beauty and Wellness Centre, adds “thermal therapy,” after “hydrotherapy,”; and
  - (c) strikes out the definition of Steam Bath.
3. Council strikes out section 28.6 in its entirety, including the title.
4. A decision by a court that any part of this by-law is illegal, void, or unenforceable severs that part from this by-law, and is not to affect the balance of this by-law.
5. This by-law is to come into force and take effect on the date of its enactment.

ENACTED by Council this                      day of                      , 2025

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Mayor

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City Clerk

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT BY-LAW CHANGES**

Note: This document is being provided for information only as a reference tool to highlight the proposed amendments. The draft amending by-laws attached to the Council report RTS No. 16473 entitled “Enabling Outdoor Cold Plunges and Saunas – Amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law and Licence By-law” represent the amendments being proposed to Council for approval. Should there be any discrepancy between this redline version and the draft amending by-laws, the draft amending by-laws prevail.

<b>Current Regulations</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Section 2 Definition “Beauty and Wellness Centre”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise the “Beauty and Wellness Centre” definition to include “thermal therapy”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow cold plunges and saunas under the “Beauty and Wellness centre” land use category. Hydrotherapy already exists in the definition and the addition of thermal therapy would clarify cold plunges and saunas fit under this use.</li> </ul>
25 district schedules permit “Beauty and Wellness Centre”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add “Beauty and Wellness Centre” land use, limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy (i.e. cold plunge and saunas) to 12 industrial district schedules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow cold plunges and saunas in all commercial and industrial zones.</li> </ul>
In some district schedules, cold plunges and saunas must be contained within a building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow “Beauty and Wellness Centre” to be permitted outdoors</li> <li>In the 12 industrial district schedules adding “Beauty and Wellness Centre” limited to hydrotherapy and thermal therapy”, permit this use outdoors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides flexibility for business operations and models</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX D

### Engagement Summary

Input for this work was completed through two touchpoints: an online survey and a Question and Answer (Q&A) session with members of the industry.

1. **Online Survey:** In May 2025, staff distributed an online survey to 27 members of the cold plunge and/or sauna industry and received 21 responses.

#### Summary

- Parks: The majority of businesses (65%) were interested in locating in parks (i.e. near parks, beaches and pools). Some operators wanted to place mobile saunas near a natural body of water or pool while others were interested in mobile cold plunge tubs filled with ice.
- Private property: A smaller number of respondents (35%) were considering locating on private property, and were interested in a range of operational set ups. Some respondents were interested in having cold plunges and/or saunas as accessory to an existing hospitality, service, health, and/or wellness business and for others, cold plunges and/or saunas would be their primary business.

#### Questions Summary

1. **Do you currently operate a business with cold plunge bath(s) and/or sauna(s)?**
  - a. The majority of respondents are interested in operating a business but do not yet have a business licence.
2. **Where is your cold plunge bath(s) and/or sauna(s) business located or expected to locate?**
  - a. Respondents with existing business licenses operate on private property.
  - b. The majority of respondents, who did not yet have a business, were interested in locating in parks, near beaches and outdoor pools.
3. **Why did you select this location for cold plunge bath(s) and/or outdoor sauna(s) operation? (i.e. Location, Access, Leasing, Rent, etc.)**
  - a. Generally, responses included: location (near public transit, high foot traffic), access to bodies of water (pool, ocean) to cold plunge and scenery/natural beauty.
4. **Is cold plunge bath(s) and/or sauna(s) the primary business at your location?**
  - a. The majority responded "yes".
5. **Are cold plunge bath(s) and/or sauna(s) located outside or inside? (mobile saunas should be considered as outdoors)**
  - a. Approximately two-thirds said outdoor only, while the remainder indicated it would be either indoor only, or a combination (both indoor and outdoor component).
6. **If your business has outdoor cold plunge bath(s) and/or sauna(s), what is the overall area in square feet (approximately)?**
  - a. The majority of respondents indicated the area would be less than 46.5 square metres (500 square feet), and a small number of respondents indicated it would be greater than 139 sq. m (1,500 sq. ft).
7. **If your business has outdoor cold plunge bath(s) and/or sauna(s), please describe them.**

- a. Cold plunge options noted the ocean and tubs.
  - i. For those proposing tubs, most respondents said less than five tubs would be used, and the tub sizes were generally in the range of 1.8 metres (6 feet) x 0.9 m (3 ft) x 0.9 m (3 ft).
- b. There was a wide range of sauna sizes, with a maximum height of 3.6 m (12 ft).
- c. Most respondents said they would have 1-2 saunas.
8. **Are you aware of Vancouver Coastal Health's requirements for cold plunge bath(s) (regulated as swimming pools) and sauna(s) (Public Health Act and Regulated Activities Regulation)? These are separate from the City of Vancouver permit process.**
  - a. The majority responded "yes".
9. **Are you aware of the City of Vancouver's water discharge protocols?**
  - a. The majority responded "yes".
10. **Is there other information that you feel the City should be aware of related to outdoor cold plunge bath(s) and/or sauna(s)?**
  - a. Generally, responses included: health and wellness benefits, opportunities to enjoy community and the outdoors, and clarifying Vancouver Coastal Health standards and application.

**2. Question & Answer (Q&A) Session:** In July 2025, staff scheduled a virtual Q&A session that was attended by 25 participants. Participants were invited to ask questions from staff in various departments (Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability; Development, Buildings, & Licensing; Parks and Recreation); and Vancouver Coastal Health related to the proposed regulations and permit process. Below is a summary of the questions and responses from the session, sorted by topic.

<b>Proposed Zoning &amp; Development By-law and Licence By-law Changes</b>	
<b>Summarized Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
Which zones will allow cold plunges/saunas to operate?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> Cold plunge and saunas would be allowed under the "Beauty and Wellness Centre" land use category. It would be allowed in all commercial and industrial zones.
What is the expected timeline for these changes?	<b>City of Vancouver</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The referral report to Council that will propose these changes to the Zoning and Development By-law and the Licence By-law is anticipated September 16 with Public Hearing on October 21. If Council approves these changes at Public Hearing, the changes would be in effect in the fall.</li> <li>The open bid for saunas at parks and beaches aims to be open to market shortly after Council approval.</li> </ul>

Will cold plunges/saunas be allowed outside?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> Yes, the proposed zoning changes/amendments would allow cold plunges/saunas to be permitted outdoors.
Will the Licence By-law be updated to remove outdated language around the Steam Bath use?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> Steam bath is currently listed under the Licence By-law, and the proposed changes are to remove it as a separate licence category. If the changes are approved by Council, cold plunges and saunas would be categorized under the 'Beauty and Wellness Centre' classification in the Licence By-law.

### **Applications & Existing Businesses/Proposals**

<b>Summarized Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
Will existing businesses operating under land uses other than "Beauty and Wellness Centre" be required to move locations or re-apply for permits?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> Businesses with existing approved permits will not need to re-apply as they have already received their approvals. If the changes are approved by Council and you are submitting a new application or adding a new cold plunge/sauna use, operators will need to meet the applicable requirements, and get the proper approvals and permits for the zone in which they wish to locate their business.
What would the building permit requirements be for cold plunges?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> The requirements will be subject to Vancouver Building By-law and a building permit will be required for cold plunges operating within a building or space.
Can I submit an application/proposal before the changes come into effect?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> If you submit a development permit application for a cold plunge and/or sauna and the proposal complies with existing regulations it can be processed and issued. If the proposal is dependent on the proposed changes, the proposed by-law changes would need to be approved by Council and enacted before a development permit could be issued.
What is the difference between "movable saunas" and "structures"?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> Movable saunas can be temporarily moved and placed on a location. Structures include saunas that are attached to structures, for example attached to pools or docks.

### **By-law & Regulatory Compliance**

<b>Summarized Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
What is the approach for businesses not adhering to the requirements?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> There will be a temporary pause on zoning enforcement. Existing establishments will be allowed to continue operating as long as they meet safety requirements. However, the City will still take

	<p>compliance action against any new businesses that are not in line with regulations. Once Council makes a decision on new regulations, all non-compliant businesses will be expected to come into compliance.</p> <p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):</b> It depends on whether the facility is approved by the City of Vancouver to operate in its location; if not approved, VCH defers to the City to take the lead on enforcement. For facilities that VCH is aware of, they are handled on a case-by-case basis. Normally, VCH uses a progressive compliance approach, requiring the facility to demonstrate compliance, and if they don't, they may be subject to enforcement actions up to and including closure. However, if the business rectifies the reasons for closure, VCH will allow it to reopen. If the business does meet City of Vancouver zoning requirements, and, operates a fill and draw that is not being emptied, cleaned and sanitized between users, it would be considered an unauthorized / unpermitted pool and subject to enforcement action.</p>
What are the penalties for non-compliance?	<p><b>City of Vancouver:</b> Penalties vary based off the non-compliant issue the City is seeking to address. For example, new operators that are operating without a licence, they could face up to a \$1,000 fine per day. If compliance issues continue, there may be prosecutions that could include fines associated with compliance. This may be different for each scenario.</p>
Will fill and draw cold plunge tubs be held to compliance with VCH requirements?	<p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):</b> Fill-and-drain systems will not be prohibited, as they are exempt from the provincial pool regulations under current legislation. They will be expected to operate accordingly (i.e. properly draining and sanitizing tubs between users) or they will be subject to enforcement action. Additionally, applicants will want to consider and comply with City bylaws.</p>
Will indoor and outdoor operations be evaluated under the same VCH standards?	<p><b>Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):</b> If a project has gone through the construction permit process, it would be subject to the same regulatory criteria regardless of whether it is indoor or outdoor, it must meet the Pool Regulation.</p>
<b>Proposals for Parks/Open Bid Process</b>	
<b>Summarized Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>

Would the contract award be granted for specific locations only, or would the successful applicant be allowed to operate anywhere that fits the approved permit? Does this include ocean-side locations?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> Awarded contracts would need to operate within a specified footprint. All permitted activities in park and beach spaces are carefully placed to ensure that there are no conflicts with other operational use and considerations. This will include sites adjacent to beach spaces.
How will the bidding process be advertised?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> Open bids are posted on the City of Vancouver open bid portal on the website. The City of Vancouver can provide a link to all participants as soon as the bidding process is open.
How will Parks and Recreation evaluate different proposals (i.e. priorities and selection criteria)?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> The open bidding process aims to secure value-for-money, and applies best practices and strong financial controls, and ensures a transparent, fair and competitive procurement process. The formal call for proposal will be posted online, and the link will be shared. City of Vancouver has typical criteria that proposals are evaluated on: -Financial capacity -Product Approach and methodology -Knowledge and experience
How many proposals will be approved?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> Space will be limited to ensure that the quantity is appropriate for the Park Board and the selected proponents.
What is the relationship between the operator and the City/Parks and Recreation?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> We are seeking a partner to assume all responsibility of managing their operation. When entering such partnerships, the Park Board acts as the landlord providing space to a tenant/leaseholder. As such, the Park Board will collect a lease payment, a revenue-share, or a combination of the above.
Will I need to resubmit my proposal, if I've already sent one, and if so, what are the steps?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> We appreciate everyone who wants to locate an outdoor sauna on parks. Having submitted an unsolicited proposal does not automatically qualify proponents for the public bidding process. Proponents can use the information already provided when submitting their proposal in an open bid process.  If you submitted an unsolicited proposal, you will be notified of the issuance of the public bid. The bid will include important information about the submission requirements, evaluation criteria, timelines, and more.

What fuels are mobile saunas permitted to use on parks and beaches?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> Parks and Recreation are conducting ongoing research and stakeholder engagement to see what fuel would be appropriate for parks and beaches. Pertinent information will be included in the public tender.
Is the City open to a pilot program? Will the City re-evaluate the changes after 3-6 months?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> While pilot programs can be effective, we are planning to enter into a multi-year agreement with the successful proponent(s) for outdoor saunas in public spaces. As with any partnership, we will evaluate the service on an ongoing basis and work with the partner to provide the best value for the public.
Is there additional information on the "Batch" beach / park permit?	<b>City of Vancouver (Parks and Recreation):</b> Through a competitive public process, Batch secured the rights to operating the concession by Kits Pool. They do not operate an outdoor sauna, nor do they have a permit or an approval to operate one in the future. All interested parties will be able to participate in the open bid, including Batch.

### **Accessibility**

<b>Summarized Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
What will be the accessibility requirements for cold plunges and saunas, and at what stage will they need to be addressed?	<b>City of Vancouver:</b> There are accessibility requirements that will depend on what is being proposed. Accessibility requirements would be considered at the building permit stage.

### **Prefabricated Cold Plunge Tubs**

<b>Summarized Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
Will VCH approve prefabricated tubs? If so, which ones do you recommend?	<b>Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):</b> It depends. Applicants must meet the submission requirements for construction permits. If they can comply with the Pool Regulation, and Design Guidelines, then approval is possible. However, to our knowledge, no engineer has signed off on a prefabricated cold plunge tub to date. One of the challenges is uncertainty around whether a cartridge filter would be accepted under current standards. VCH staff are not currently aware of any examples but will assess applications for construction permits on a case-by-case basis as they are submitted.
If there's a sand filter in a prefab tub would that solve the cartridge issue?	<b>Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):</b> Applications are reviewed as they are submitted. If an application for a prefabricated tub with a sand filter

	is submitted, it will be evaluated for approval against the Pool Regulation.
<b>VCH Jurisdiction</b>	
<b>Summarized Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
Why is VCH involved in the approval process for business that locate on parks and beaches?	<b>Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):</b> Saunas fall under the Public Health and Regulated Activities Regulation and are therefore subject to oversight by VCH. While the regulatory requirements for saunas are minimal, they are still enforced. <b>Park Board</b> will ensure all regulatory requirements are met. Any sauna permitted to operate in park spaces must comply with these regulations. Council included VCH in its motion to ensure alignment with health and safety regulations from the province and VCH.
We are interested in VCH's development of regulations/guidelines/standards.	<b>Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):</b> VCH draft 'Guidelines for Cold Plunge Pool' have been created awaiting further direction from the province. Opportunity to provide input on provincial regulations, guidelines or standards would be with the Ministry of Health.

## APPENDIX E

### Vancouver Coastal Health Presentation “Regulatory Administration of Cold Plunges and Pools” – July 8, 2025

# VCH Regulatory Administration

Cold Plunge Pools & Saunas

July 8, 2025



2025-07-24 2:40 PM

## Territory Acknowledgement

Vancouver Coastal Health is committed to delivering exceptional care to 1.25 million people, including the First Nations, Métis and Inuit, within the traditional territories of the Heiltsuk, Kitasoo-Xai'xais, Lil'wat, Musqueam, N'Quatqua, Nuxalk, Samahquam, shíshálh, Skatin, Squamish, Tla'amin, Tsleil-Waututh, Wuikinuxv, and Xa'xtsa.

**We wish to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the x̱məθḵəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.**

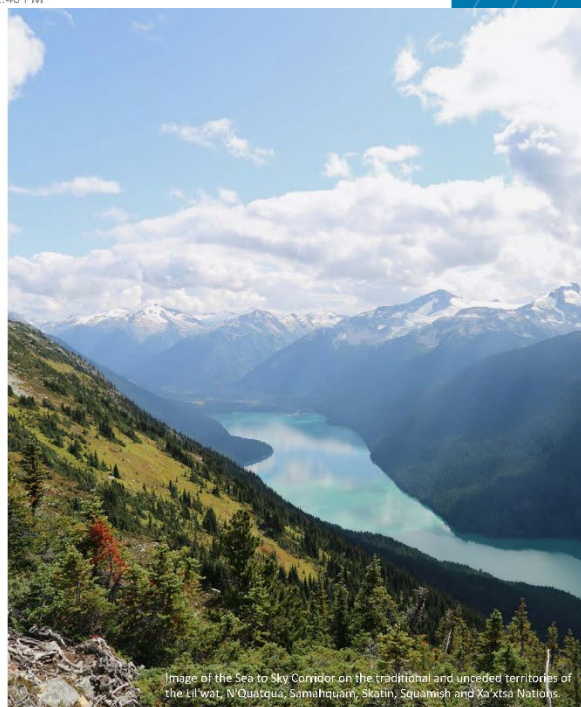


Image of the Sea to Sky Corridor on the traditional and unceded territories of the Lil'wat, N'Quatqua, Samahquam, Skatin, Squamish and Xa'xtsa Nations.



## Regulatory Landscape - Pools

- Public Health
  - Ministry of Health
  - 5 Regional Health Authorities (HAs), 2 provincial HAs - FNHA, PHSA
- The Ministry of Health is responsible for managing regulatory amendments and any provincial policy or guidance.
- Each HA is responsible to administer the various provincial acts related to Public Health (Public Health Act, Drinking Water Protection Act, etc), and those regulations pursuant to the acts.
  - Public Health Act – Pool Regulation, Regulated Activities Regulation, Food Premises Regulation
- Requested clarity and direction from province around regulating cold plunges.
  - Continue to advocate for updates to existing regulation and modernization.
- Trying to work with other HAs to aim for consistent approach – challenges.

## Regulatory Landscape - Pools

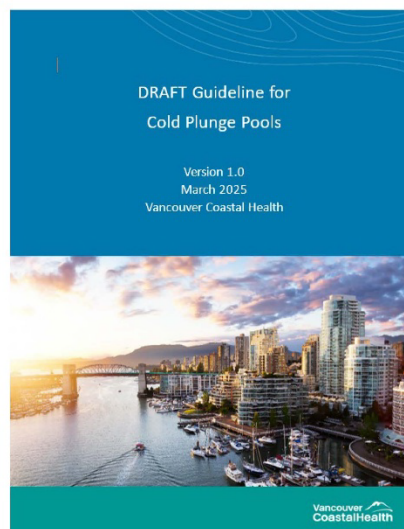
- BC *Pool Regulation (B.C. Reg. 296/2010)* did not contemplate cold plunge pools, particularly single person tub style pools.
- As of January 1, 2025, [Ontario is regulating cold plunge tanks as pools](#)
- This sets a new Canadian standard for regulation in this area.
- The Ontario *Public Pools Regulation* definition as follows:  
*“public cold plunge pool” means a public pool that is maintained at a temperature of 15 degrees Celsius or less, with or without hydrojets, that is not drained, cleaned, sanitized and refilled before use by each individual;*

## VCH Regulatory Approach – Cold Plunge Pools

- New cold plunge facilities proposed within VCH will be regulated under the BC *Pool Regulation* as a pool unless they are drained, cleaned, sanitized and refilled after each use before they are used by another individual (i.e. exempted from the regulation as per sec 2(1)(c) – aka fill and draw pools).
- Classification cold plunge pools:
  - > 61 cm deep: commercial pool or public pool.
  - < 61 cm deep: fits definition of ‘hot tub’ with exception of the word ‘hot’.

## Guideline for Cold Plunge Pool – Draft in Progress

- VCH guidance document drafted.
- Intended for designers and operators to help interpret the *Pool Regulation* with respect to cold plunge pool design and operation.
  - Construction Permit (CP) process outlined.
  - Operating Permit application process.
  - Facility design criteria and considerations.
  - Operations & Maintenance.
  - Fees.



## VCH Regulatory Approach – Cold Plunge (Fill-Draw)

- If intended to be operate as a “fill and draw”, considered exempt from the *BC Pool Regulation* as outlined in sec 2(1)(c).
- Applications and plans will be reviewed by VCH for approval.
- Required to submit an operational plan outlining policies and procedures that will be followed to achieve the necessary steps between each user (i.e. drained, cleaned, sanitized and refilled).
- Non-adherence to the operational plan may result in issuance of a **Closure Order**.
  - Inability to operate the pool as a “fill and draw” as intended to be considered exempt from the *BC Pool Regulation* negates the exemption.
  - Therefore, this would be considered a “Pool” under the regulation.
  - Violation for operating a pool without approval and without a valid Permit to Operate.

## VCH Regulatory Approach – Saunas

- Regulated under the *BC Regulated Activities Regulation (B.C. Reg. 161/2011)* as a “Personal Service Establishment”.
- Definition:
  - “personal service establishment” means an establishment in which a person provides a service to or on the body of another person, and includes a barbershop, beauty parlour, health spa, massage parlour, tattoo shop, sauna and steam bath;
- Saunas are subject to review and inspection by VCH.
- Operator is required to have an adequate supply of hot/cold running water for operating and cleaning purposes.
- Access to proper hand washing facilities.
- Historically, saunas operated in variety of settings, most often, in conjunction with existing community pool facilities, steam rooms, health clubs or aesthetic spas.
- Emerging trend of stand-alone saunas, or saunas operating adjunct to cold plunge (as part of a circuit of moving from hot to cold).

## Extra Resources

- Health Protection Branch, Ministry of Health. (2021, October). *BC guidelines for pool design: Interim version 3*. Government of British Columbia. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/documents/pool\\_design\\_guidelines\\_oct\\_2021\\_v3\\_interim.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/documents/pool_design_guidelines_oct_2021_v3_interim.pdf)
- Health Protection Branch, Ministry of Health. (2021, October). *BC guidelines for pool operations: Interim version 3*. Government of British Columbia. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/documents/pool\\_operations\\_guidelines\\_oct\\_2021\\_v3\\_interim.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/documents/pool_operations_guidelines_oct_2021_v3_interim.pdf)
- Pool Construction Permits <https://www.vch.ca/en/service/pool-construction-permits#overview>
- Personal Service Establishments <https://www.vch.ca/en/health-topics/personal-service-establishments>