

# **CITY OF VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA**



## **DRINKING WATER CONSERVATION BY-LAW NO. 12086**

**This By-law is printed under and  
by authority of the Council of  
the City of Vancouver**

**(Consolidated for convenience only  
to June 13, 2023)**

# **DRINKING WATER CONSERVATION BY-LAW**

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**BY-LAW NO. 12086**

**A By-law to repeal  
the Water Shortage Response By-law and  
to enact a new Drinking Water Conservation By-law**

**[Consolidated for convenience only,  
amended to include By-law No. 13707  
effective June 13, 2023]**

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THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VANCOUVER, in public meeting, enacts as follows:

**PART 1  
INTERPRETATION**

**By-law name**

1.1 The name of this by-law, for citation, is the “Drinking Water Conservation By-law”.

**Definitions**

1.2 In this by-law:

“aesthetic water feature” means a fountain, pond, or other water feature that primarily serves an aesthetic purpose, but does not include ponds that contain fish;

“alternative water sources” means water that comes from sources other than the Greater Vancouver Water District or the City;

“automatic shut-off device” means a device, attached to a water hose, that shuts off the supply of water automatically unless the application of hand pressure allows the supply of water;

“automatic watering” means applying water using an automated water delivery system that requires only minimal human intervention or supervision and typically employs mechanical, electronic, or other components and devices, including but not limited to timers, sensors, computers, or mechanical appliances;

“boulevards adjacent to the premises” means:

- (a) on a street with curbs, the portion of public property between the outside curb and the adjoining property line of the premises; and
- (b) on a street without curbs, the portion of public property between the edge of the roadway and the adjoining property line of the premises;

“City Engineer” means the individual appointed by Council to be General Manager of Engineering Services or a person duly authorized to carry out the powers and duties of the General Manager of Engineering Services;

“commercial vehicle wash facility” means a facility that offers vehicle washing services to the public for a fee, but does not include car dealerships, fleet vehicle washing facilities, or charity car washes;

“GVWD Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Greater Vancouver Water District, which operates under the name “Metro Vancouver”;

“manual watering” means applying water using a device or tool that is manually held or operated by a human being, without automatic watering;

“new lawn” means a lawn that is newly established either by seeding or the laying of new sod or turf;

“non-residential premises” means premises zoned for uses other than residential uses, and includes premises zoned for mixed residential and non-residential uses;

“over-seeded” means the application of grass seed on existing turf for the purpose of mitigating against grass thinning;

“person” does not include a municipality, a regional district, the Province of British Columbia, or any body appointed or created under an enactment of Canada or British Columbia;

“playing field” means a field located on non-residential premises that is designed and maintained to be played upon, or that is used for sporting or other community events and activities, but does not include lawns or golf courses;

“residential premises” means premises zoned for residential uses;

“sand-based playing field” means a playing field that is constructed with a highly permeable sand-based root zone over a drainage system with drain pipes bedded in gravel;

“soaker hose” means a garden hose or pipe with small holes that allow water to seep into the ground, discharging water through the entire length of its porous surface;

“soil-based playing field” means a playing field that is covered with grass, sod, or turf;

“sprinkler” means a device that sprays water, and includes both automatic and non-automatic devices;

“stage 1 water use restrictions” mean restrictions on water use described in Part 6 of this by-law;

“stage 2 water use restrictions” mean restrictions on water use described in Part 7 of this by-law;

“stage 3 water use restrictions” mean restrictions on water use described in Part 8 of this by-law;

“stage 4 water use restrictions” mean restrictions on water use described in Part 9 of this by-law;

“water play park” means a recreational facility that is primarily outdoors, including spray pools, wading pools, spray parks, splash pads, and water slides;

“water use permit” means a permit issued under this by-law that authorizes watering a new lawn or an over-seeded playing field, or a lawn being treated for pest infestations using nematodes;

“water use plan” means a water use plan approved by the City Engineer for a playing field or golf course under this by-law; and

“water use restriction stages” means stage 1, 2, 3 and 4 water use restrictions as described in this by-law.

### **Table of contents**

1.3 The table of contents for this by-law is for convenient reference only, and is not for use in interpreting or enforcing this by-law.

### **Schedules**

1.4 The schedules attached to this by-law form part of this by-law.

### **Severability**

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

## **PART 2 AUTHORITIES**

### **Administration**

2.1 The City Engineer is authorized to administer the applicable provisions of this by-law.

### **Power of entry**

2.2 The City Engineer, and all persons authorized to act on behalf of the City Engineer, may enter any building or premises at any reasonable time for the purpose of administering or enforcing this by-law.

### **Authority of the City Engineer**

2.3 The City Engineer is authorized to:

- (a) activate water use restriction stages, other than stage 1 water restrictions;
- (b) announce water use restriction stages;
- (c) issue water use permits;
- (d) issue notices or orders; and
- (e) approve water use plans,

in accordance with this by-law.

### **Notices and orders**

2.4 The City Engineer may issue in writing such notices or orders as may be necessary to notify a person of a contravention of this by-law, in the manner set out in this by-law.

### **Scope of order**

2.5 The City Engineer may order a person who contravenes any provision of this by-law:

- (a) to comply with the by-law within a specified time;
- (b) to discontinue or refrain from proceeding with any water use in contravention of this by-law; or
- (c) to allow the City Engineer to enter any building or premises at any reasonable time for the purpose of administering or enforcing this by-law.

### **Service of order**

2.6 A notice or order issued under this by-law is sufficiently served if:

- (a) the notice or order is delivered by hand, by ordinary prepaid mail or by registered mail, to the owner's address as shown in the records of the Assessment Authority of British Columbia; or
- (b) in the case of an owner that is a corporation, the notice or order is delivered by hand, by ordinary prepaid mail, or by registered mail, to the registered and records office of the corporation; or
- (c) in any case, the notice or order is delivered by electronic mail to the electronic mail address of a water use permit holder as shown in the permit application, or of the applicant for a water use plan as shown in the plan application; or
- (d) the notice or order is posted on the affected premises.



### **Deemed receipt of order**

2.7 Notices and orders issued in accordance with this by-law are deemed to have been received:

- (a) four days after mailing, if sent by ordinary prepaid mail, to the mailing address of the owner;
- (b) on the date of delivery as noted in the Canada Post tracking system, if sent by registered mail;
- (c) 24 hours after sending, if sent by electronic mail to the electronic mail address of the permit holder as shown in the permit application or of the applicant for a water use plan as shown in the plan application; and
- (d) immediately upon receipt, if handed to the owner or a representative of the owner, delivered to the registered and records office for the owner, or posted on the affected premises.

## **PART 3 WATER USE PERMITS**

### **Application for water use permit**

3.1 A person may apply to the City Engineer for a water use permit for:

- (a) a new lawn or an over-seeded playing field; or
- (b) a lawn that is being treated for pest infestations using nematodes.

### **Permit application form**

3.2 The permit application must be in the form prescribed by the City Engineer and accompanied by the requisite fee set out in Schedule A to this by-law.

### **Permit time limits**

3.3 The City Engineer may issue a water use permit for a specific address or location, except that:

- (a) a water use permit must be for no more than 21 consecutive days;
- (b) an extension of a water use permit must be for no more than 21 additional consecutive days;
- (c) a water use permit must not be issued for a specific address or location for more than 42 days in total in a calendar year; and

- (d) a water use permit must not be issued for a specific address or location if a water use permit has been issued for that specific address or location in any prior calendar year unless, in the opinion of the City Engineer, a water use permit is necessary in the circumstances.

### **Permit conditions**

3.4 The City Engineer may impose conditions on water use permits regarding:

- (a) time, dates, locations and duration of watering;
- (b) inspections;
- (c) responsibilities of the permit holder; and
- (d) compliance with this by-law or other enactments.

### **Effect of permit on lawns**

3.5 A person who waters a lawn in accordance with a water use permit:

- (a) is exempt from stage 1 water use restrictions to the extent provided in this by-law; and
- (b) is not exempt from the general water restrictions or stage 2, 3 and 4 water use restrictions, except that any exemptions under a permit issued before stage 2 restrictions came into effect remain in effect until the permit expires.

### **Effect of permit on playing fields**

3.6 A person who waters a playing field in accordance with a water use permit:

- (a) is exempt from stage 1, 2 and 3 water use restrictions to the extent provided in this by-law; and
- (b) is not exempt from the general water restrictions or stage 4 water use restrictions.

### **Posting and compliance with permit**

3.7 A person who is the holder of a water use permit must:

- (a) post the water use permit issued by the City Engineer, at the place specified in the water use permit, and in such a manner that the permit is visible from the street;

- (b) only water a lawn or playing field at the place and during the times and dates specified in the water use permit;
- (c) comply with all conditions on the water use permit; and
- (d) comply with all applicable provisions of this by-law.

#### **Extension of permit**

3.8 Before the expiry of a water use permit for a new lawn or an over-seeded playing field, a person may apply for one extension of the permit on the same terms and conditions as previously imposed by the City Engineer, accompanied by the requisite fee set out in Schedule A to this by-law.

#### **Expiry of permit**

3.9 A water use permit expires 21 days after the date of issue or, if the City Engineer has granted an extension, 42 days after the original date of issue.

#### **Revocation of permit**

3.10 The City Engineer may revoke a permit if, in the opinion of the City Engineer:

- (a) there is a contravention of a condition of the permit;
- (b) the permit was issued in error;
- (c) the permit was issued on the basis of false or incorrect information; or
- (d) the permit holder fails to comply with the provisions of this by-law.

### **PART 4 WATER USE PLANS**

#### **Application for approval of water use plan**

4.1 A person may apply in writing to the City Engineer for approval of a proposed water use plan for a playing field or golf course and the application must include the requisite fee set out in Schedule A to this by-law and the following information:

- (a) the volume of water the operation has consumed from May 1 to October 15 for each of the preceding five years;
- (b) the volume of water the operation would consume, under the proposed water use plan, from May 1 to October 15 annually;

- (c) proposed water conservation measures;
- (d) proposed watering schedules, based on stage 1, 2 and 3 water use restrictions;
- (e) the proposed implementation date for the water use plan; and
- (f) such further information as the City Engineer may require.

### **Consideration of proposed plan**

4.2 The City Engineer may:

- (a) approve a proposed water use plan;
- (b) amend a proposed water use plan prior to approval; or
- (c) refuse to approve a proposed water use plan.

### **Plan conditions**

4.3 The City Engineer may impose conditions on a water use plan.

### **Effect of plan**

4.4 A person who waters a playing field or golf course pursuant to a water use plan approved under this Part:

- (a) is exempt from stage 1, 2 and 3 water use restrictions to the extent provided in this by-law; and
- (b) is not exempt from stage 4 water use restrictions.

### **Reporting and compliance with water use plan**

4.5 A person who implements an approved water use plan must:

- (a) start the water use plan on the implementation date set out in the water use plan;
- (b) report actual water consumption to the City Engineer:
  - (i) monthly when stage 1 or 2 water use restrictions are in effect, and
  - (ii) bi-weekly when stage 3 water use restrictions are in effect; and
- (c) comply with all commitments, conditions, and restrictions set out in the water use plan.

### **Termination of plan by City Engineer**

4.6 The City Engineer may terminate or suspend a water use plan by notifying the applicant in writing:

- (a) 24 hours before the termination or suspension date, if an applicant fails to comply with the provisions of this by-law; or
- (b) seven days before the termination date in all other cases.

### **Termination of plan by applicant**

4.7 An applicant may terminate a water use plan by notifying the City Engineer in writing, in which case the water use plan will terminate on the later of the date specified in the notice or the date on which the City Engineer receives the notice.

## **PART 5 WATER USE RESTRICTION STAGES**

### **Stage 1 water use restrictions**

5.1 Stage 1 water use restrictions are automatically in effect from May 1 to October 15 in each calendar year, unless the City Engineer:

- (a) activates a different water use restriction stage; and
- (b) announces to the public that a different water use restriction stage is in place, in accordance with this by-law.

### **Activation of water use restriction stage**

5.2 The City Engineer is authorized to:

- (a) activate a water use restriction stage on receipt of notice from the GVWD commissioner of the activation of a water use restriction stage by the GVWD;
- (b) activate a water use restriction stage if, in the opinion of the City Engineer, such activation is necessary to protect and conserve the City water supply; and
- (c) activate a water use restriction stage other than a stage 1 water use restriction.

### **Announcement of water use restriction stage**

5.3 The City Engineer must make a public announcement of the activation of any water use restriction stage, other than the automatic activation of the stage 1 water use restriction on May 1 of each calendar year, and may do so by any or all of the following means:

- (a) radio or television broadcast;
- (b) posting on the City social media platforms;
- (c) delivery of notices; or
- (d) publication in a local newspaper.

### **Commencement of water use restriction stage**

5.4 A water use restriction stage, other than the automatic activation of the stage 1 water use restriction on May 1, takes effect 72 hours after a public announcement is made in accordance with any of the provisions of section 5.3.

### **Deemed notice**

5.5 Notice of a water use restriction stage, other than the automatic activation of the stage 1 water use restriction on May 1, is deemed to have been received 72 hours after a public announcement in accordance with any of the provisions of section 5.3.

### **Expiry of existing restriction stage**

5.6 A water use restriction stage that takes effect under section 5.4 replaces any existing water use restriction stage.

## **PART 6 GENERAL WATER RESTRICTIONS**

### **Water use restrictions do not apply to alternative water sources**

6.1 The water use restrictions set out in this by-law do not apply to a person watering using water obtained from alternative water sources.

### **General prohibition against wasting water**

6.2 A person must not waste water, or suffer, permit or allow waste of water at any time. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, a person must not waste water, or suffer, permit or allow waste of water at any time by:

- (a) the free discharge or flow of water from premises, on or into a sanitary sewer, watercourse, storm drain, street or adjacent premises;
- (b) leaking of water from appliances, devices, machines, equipment, systems (including irrigation systems), ponds, fountains or water features;
- (c) the use of water features, fountains or swimming pools, which do not have a water recirculation device;
- (d) the use of an irrigation system which applies water to an impervious surface; or

- (e) the use of a water hose which is not equipped with an automatic shut-off device.

**Exception for certain water features or fountains**

6.2A Despite section 6.2(c), the following Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation water features or fountains, which do not have a water recirculation device, may be used:

- (a) Helmcken Park Fountain;
- (b) Haro and Bute Street Fountain;
- (c) Barclay Heritage Square Fountain;
- (d) Davis Fountain; and
- (e) Laurel Street Landbridge Fountain.

For clarity, all other sections of this by-law continue to apply, including the other subsections in section 6.2.

**PART 7  
STAGE 1  
WATER USE RESTRICTIONS**

**Compliance with stage 1**

7.1 No person shall fail to comply with the water use restrictions in this Part 7 from May 1<sup>st</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Stage 1 restrictions**

7.2 When stage 1 water use restrictions are in effect, no person shall:

- (a) water a lawn, including any cultivated boulevards adjacent to the premises:
  - (i) at residential premises with even-numbered addresses, except:
    - (A) by means of automatic watering on Saturdays between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m., and
    - (B) by means of manual watering on Saturdays between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.,
  - (ii) at residential premises with odd-numbered addresses, except:
    - (A) by means of automatic watering on Sundays between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m., and

- (B) by means of manual watering on Sundays between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.,
- (iii) at non-residential premises with even-numbered addresses, except:
  - (A) by means of automatic watering on Mondays between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., and
  - (B) by means of manual watering on Mondays between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., or
- (iv) at non-residential premises with odd-numbered addresses, except:
  - (A) by means of automatic watering on Tuesdays between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., and
  - (B) by means of manual watering on Tuesdays between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.;
- (b) water trees, shrubs, flowers and plants using a sprinkler:
  - (i) at residential premises, except between 5:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., or
  - (ii) at non-residential premises, except between 4:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.; or
- (c) water a soil-based or sand-based playing field, except between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m.

### **Exemptions from stage 1 restrictions**

7.3 Notwithstanding section 7.2, a person may water:

- (a) a lawn or playing field in compliance with a water use permit issued under this by-law;
- (b) a playing field or golf course in accordance with a water use plan approved under this by-law;
- (c) a vegetable garden or edible plants; or
- (d) concrete for curing purposes.

## **PART 8 STAGE 2 WATER USE RESTRICTIONS**

### **Compliance with stage 2**



8.1 No person shall fail to comply with the water use restrictions in this Part 8, when stage 2 water use restrictions are in effect.

### **Stage 2 restrictions**

8.2 When stage 2 water use restrictions are in effect, no person shall:

- (a) water a lawn, including any cultivated boulevards adjacent to the premises;
- (b) water trees, shrubs, flowers and plants using a sprinkler:
  - (i) at residential premises, except between 5:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., or
  - (ii) at non-residential premises, except between 4:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.;
- (c) wash an impermeable outdoor surface except:
  - (i) for health or safety reasons,
  - (ii) to prepare a surface for painting, sealing, or similar treatment, or
  - (iii) if the washing is carried out by a commercial cleaning operation for aesthetic purposes;
- (d) fill, refill or add water to an aesthetic water feature;
- (e) water a golf course fairway on more than one day in any seven day period;
- (f) water a soil-based playing field on more than four days in any seven day period, and only between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. on those days;
- (g) water a sand-based playing field, except between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m.; or
- (h) operate a water play park, unless it is equipped with user-activated switches.

### **Exemptions from stage 2 restrictions**

8.3 Notwithstanding section 8.2, a person may water:

- (a) a lawn in compliance with a water use permit issued under this by-law before stage 2 water use restrictions came into effect;
- (b) a playing field in compliance with a water use permit issued under this by-law;
- (c) a playing field or golf course in accordance with a water use plan approved under this by-law;
- (d) a vegetable garden or edible plants; or

- (e) concrete for curing purposes.

**PART 9  
STAGE 3  
WATER USE RESTRICTIONS**

**Compliance with stage 3**

9.1 No person shall fail to comply with the water use restrictions in this Part 9, when stage 3 water use restrictions are in effect.

**Stage 3 restrictions**

9.2 When stage 3 water use restrictions are in effect, no person shall:

- (a) water a lawn, including any cultivated boulevards adjacent to the premises;
- (b) water trees, shrubs, flowers or plants with a sprinkler or a soaker hose;
- (c) wash an impermeable outdoor surface except:
  - (i) for health or safety reasons, or
  - (ii) if the washing is carried out by a commercial cleaning operation to prepare a surface for painting, sealing, or similar treatment;
- (d) fill, refill or add water to a an aesthetic water feature, hot tub or swimming pool;
- (e) wash a motor vehicle or boat by hand, except to clean windows, lights, mirrors, licence plates or boat engines for safety reasons;
- (f) water a golf course fairway;
- (g) operate a commercial vehicle wash facility;
- (h) water a soil-based playing field on more than three days in any seven day period, and may only water between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. on those days;
- (i) water a sand-based playing field on more than five days in any seven day period, and may only water between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. on those days; or
- (j) operate a water play park, unless it is equipped with user-activated switches.

**Exemptions from stage 3 restrictions**

9.3 Notwithstanding section 9.2, a person may:

- (a) water:

- (i) a playing field in compliance with a water use permit issued under this by-law,
  - (ii) a playing field or golf course in accordance with a water use plan approved under this by-law,
  - (iii) a vegetable garden or edible plants, or
  - (iv) concrete for curing purposes;
- (b) operate a non-residential hot tub or swimming pool pursuant to a permit issued by a health authority; or
- (c) operate a commercial vehicle wash facility that:
- (i) in the case of a facility that installed an automatic vehicle wash system before November 1, 2017, is operating on a basic wash and rinse cycle only,
  - (ii) in the case of a facility that installed an automatic vehicle wash system after November 1, 2017, is operating using a water recycling system that achieves a minimum 60% water recovery rate over the full cycle wash, and
  - (iii) in the case of a hand wash and self-service facility, is operating using high pressure wands or brushes that achieve a maximum flow rate of 11.4 litres per minute.

**PART 10  
STAGE 4  
WATER USE RESTRICTIONS**

**Compliance with stage 4**

10.1 No person shall fail to comply with the water use restrictions in this Part 10, when stage 4 water use restrictions are in effect.

**Stage 4 restrictions**

10.2 When stage 4 water use restrictions are in effect, no person shall:

- (a) water a lawn, including any cultivated boulevards adjacent to the premises;
- (b) water trees, shrubs, flowers, plants, or vegetable gardens;
- (c) wash an impermeable outdoor surface, except when ordered to do so for health or safety reasons by a regulatory authority;
- (d) fill, refill or add water to an aesthetic water feature, hot tub or swimming pool;
- (e) wash a motor vehicle or boat, except to clean windows, lights, mirrors, licence plates or boat engines for safety reasons;

- (f) operate a commercial vehicle wash facility;
- (g) water a golf course;
- (h) water a soil-based or sand-based playing field; or

operate a water play park.

## **PART 11 OFFENCES AND PENALTIES**

### **Offences**

11.1 Every person who:

- (a) violates any provision of this by-law;
- (b) suffers, permits or allows any act to be done in contravention of this by-law;
- (c) neglects to do anything required to be done by this by-law; or
- (d) fails to comply with an order or notice given under this by-law,

is guilty of an offence and liable to the penalties listed herein.

### **Fines and penalties**

11.2 Every person who commits an offence against this by-law is liable to a fine of no less than \$250 and no more than \$10,000 for each offence.

### **Continuing offences**

11.3 Every person who commits an offence of a continuing nature against this by-law is liable to a fine of no less than \$250 and no more than \$10,000 for each day such offence is continued.

### **Minimum fines based on water use restriction stages**

11.4 Notwithstanding sections 11.2 and 11.3, every person who commits an offence:

- (a) against the provisions of Part 6 of this by-law when stage 1 water use restrictions are in effect, is liable to a fine of no less than \$250.00;
- (b) against the provisions of Part 7 of this by-law, is liable to a fine of no less than \$250.00;
- (c) against the provisions of Part 6 of this by-law when stage 2 water use restrictions are in effect, is liable to a fine of no less than \$500.00;

- (d) against the provisions of Part 8 of this by-law, is liable to a fine of no less than \$500.00;
- (e) against the provisions of Part 6 of this by-law when stage 3 water use restrictions are in effect, is liable to a fine of no less than \$750.00;
- (f) against the provisions of Part 9 of this by-law, is liable to a fine of no less than \$750.00;
- (g) against the provisions of Part 6 of this by-law when stage 4 water use restrictions are in effect, is liable to a fine of no less than \$1000.00; and
- (h) against the provisions of Part 10 of this by-law, is liable to a fine of no less than \$1,000.00.

**Onus regarding exemption**

11.5 In a prosecution under this by-law, the onus of establishing an exemption under sections 7.3, 8.3 or 9.3, or of establishing that a person is using water obtained from alternative water sources, lies on the person claiming the exemption.

**PART 12  
MISCELLANEOUS**

**Repeal**

12.1 Council repeals Water Shortage Response By-law No. 8912.

**Force and effect**

12.2 This by-law is to come into force and take effect on the date of its enactment.

ENACTED by Council this 1<sup>st</sup> day of May, 2018

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ "Gregor Robertson"  
Mayor

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ "Katrina Leckovic"  
City Clerk

**SCHEDULE A**  
**FEES**

**Water Use Permit application fee for new lawn or  
over-seeded playing field ..... \$35.31**

**Water Use Permit extension application fee for new lawn or  
over-seeded playing field ..... \$35.31**

**Water Use Permit application fee for lawn being treated for  
pest infestations using nematodes..... \$20.00**