



# NOTICE OF MOTION

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Date: November 12, 2024  
To: Mayor and Council  
From: Councillors Tim Bennett and Trudy Klassen  
Subject: Access to Public Washrooms in Downtown Prince George  
Attachments:

The date for this motion to be considered is at the December 2, 2024 regular council meeting.

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## RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Council direct administration to prepare a report for council by Q3 2025 that updates the costing of recommendations from the 2019 staff report entitled "Downtown Public Washroom access" recommendations in particular
  - a. *Option 2. Enhance access to washrooms located in selected downtown service provider locations by providing funding to enable dedicated monitoring services. Recommended sites would include Saint Vincent de Paul, Positive Living North (Firepit), and AWAC. Service providers would continue to cover all operating and maintenance costs. Currently, washrooms at these locations are available for use. However, access is often dependent upon the ability of staff to effectively monitor use. The small one time grant is intended to offset costs associated with the placement of a monitor during peak access hours. Agencies would be encouraged to utilize a client/peer employment model.*
  - b. *Option 1: Open the washrooms at the Canada Games Plaza from 7 am to 11 pm daily with an experienced and skilled monitor on-site during operating hours. It is recommended that this option operate as a pilot during the period June 15 – October 1. CPG custodial staff would provide daily cleaning services.*

And highlights what public washroom facilities are currently available in Downtown Prince George and where possible the report compares public washroom availability with our comparable municipalities in BC as well as Grande Prairie and Edmonton.

2. That council directs staff to build a question or option in appropriate future surveys about public washroom access to determine need and demand;
3. That council direct administration to explore grant opportunities to expand safe public washroom access in City of Prince George including enhancing washroom upgrades for year round access.

4. That council direct the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs to develop an advocacy plan to lobby both the Provincial and Federal Government for increased capital funding to communities to ensure safe and clean access to washrooms for all residents.

#### DISCUSSION:

Access to public washrooms is incredibly important when it comes to inclusion, accessibility and ensuring a strong, healthy and welcoming community. Access to public washroom space is not only to support those currently un or underhoused but also to support families with young children, individuals with either visible or invisible medical conditions and those who drink too many coffees on their trip to the Farmer's Market.

Public washrooms are a critical part of creating a people centered community (Durand-Wood, 2024). A lack of public washrooms also "disproportionately affects people with ill health or disability, the elderly, women, outdoor workers and the homeless and "knowledge of lack of facilities nearby acts as a 'loo leash", deterring as many as one in five (20%) from venturing out of their homes as often as they would like. This rises to over two in five (43%) among those with medical conditions requiring frequent toilet use" (Standwell-Smith, 2019).

Currently the City of Prince George closes access to washroom facilities in parks as the weather starts to turn, further limiting access to free public washroom facilities.

It is important to recognize that the addition of transitional housing projects will bring additional washroom access facilities to those residents accessing the services, however this is still a lack of washrooms for general public use.

Previously the City of Prince George have provided various solutions for Public Washrooms and these are highlighted in the 2019 Report to Council from City Administration (attached). The report highlighted some safety concerns related to those pilots. The report also highlighted some of the challenges that other communities are facing such as Edmonton and Vancouver. Since the publication of the report there have been new technologies introduced, additional communities introducing self-cleaning public washroom facilities, such as our regional Neighbor Valemount and changes to what services may or may not be available for members of the public.

The facilities that were built in Valemount by Urben Blu should be an example of a unit possible in Prince George

*"The new washroom facility boasts automatic water and sanitation features that control water consumption and clean the space between uses. The Village says these features greatly reduce the need to touch surfaces, reducing risk, while also saving on operating and maintenance costs. Unlike the previous washrooms on that site, these will be open to the public year-round. Made by Urben Blu, based in Quebec, the Village says the washrooms are built for extreme weather and follow the guidelines of the Official Community Plan, incorporating mountain community style steep roofing, a rock base and natural colours. The facility features vandalism resistant materials and includes enhanced programmable safety features." (Kiel, 2022)*

The funding for the Valemount project did come primarily from funding streams that no longer exist or that the City of Prince George are not eligible for. Some concerns were shared by residents in Valemount

(<https://www.therockymountaingoat.com/2023/09/c3-pee-o-not-living-up-to-expectations/>) and it would be important that a maintenance and monitoring plan is build into future budgets if the project was approved.

In order to make an informed decision it is critical to understand what is currently being offered in City of Prince George, what options might be available to expand public washroom use and opportunities to expand services throughout the community.

There is also an opportunity to explore what funding opportunities might be available to pursue the goal of expanded public washroom access. This could include grants or government funding to improve equity, accessibility and creating a vibrant community.

A report back to Council will allow council to determine next steps including but not limited to receipt of the report, referral to budget consultations or addition to future capital plans.

References:

Durand-Wood, E. (2024, May 28). *Dignity, inclusivity and walkability: How public bathrooms help cities thrive*. Strong Towns. <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2024/5/16/dignity-inclusivity-and-walkability-how-public-bathrooms-help-cities-flourish>

Stanwell-Smith, R. (2019, May). *Taking the p\*\*\*? the decline of the great british toilet*. <https://www.rsph.org.uk/static/uploaded/459f4802-ae43-40b8-b5a006f6ead373e6.pdf>

Kiel, L. (2022, August 11). *Self-cleaning washrooms open in Valemount*. The Rocky Mountain Goat. <https://www.therockymountaingoat.com/2022/08/self-cleaning-washrooms-open/>

Attached:

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 staff report to Council – Downtown Public Washroom Access.

Respectfully submitted,



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Councillor Tim Bennett



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Councillor Trudy Klassen