

Date: March 9, 2026

To: **Mayor and Council.**

Name and title: Eric Depenau, Director of Administrative Services

Subject: Downtown Prince George Public Washroom Survey What We Heard Report

Attachment(s): Appendix A: Summary of Survey Responses  
Appendix B: Themed Social Media Comments  
Appendix C: Email Correspondence Received  
Appendix D: Report from September 17 2025 regular council meeting titled “Access to Public Washrooms in Downtown Prince George” PowerPoint Presentation

#### Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the engagement results in the report dated March 9, 2026, from the Director of Administrative Services, titled “Downtown Prince George Public Washroom Survey What We Heard Report”.

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of what we heard from the downtown washroom survey participants, highlighting key themes, perspectives, and considerations to inform next steps in decision making.

#### Strategic Priorities:

The downtown washroom survey is aligned with Council’s Strategic Priorities by engaging residents in infrastructure decision making, promoting community well-being and safety downtown, and informing responsible allocation of City resources through public input.

#### Background:

Access to public washrooms in downtown Prince George has been discussed for many years, shaped by ongoing and-polarized concerns related to availability, safety, maintenance, and impacts on surrounding businesses and service providers. The City has examined this issue through multiple reports and consultations, including engagement with downtown service providers in 2018, 2022, and 2025, as well as a 2022 survey with individuals who experience homelessness and rely on downtown services. A temporary pilot at Canada Games Plaza in the summer of 2020 provided short term access during the COVID 19 pandemic and offered practical lessons regarding operations, monitoring, and costs. The City also currently incurs significant ongoing costs related to managing public biohazards in the downtown, including cleanup of human waste and associated impacts, which provides additional context for considering potential approaches to improved washroom access.

At the regular council meeting on September 17, 2025, Council received an updated report outlining current conditions, revised cost estimates, comparisons with other municipalities, and potential approaches to improving access. Following receipt of that report, Council directed Administration to seek public input to better understand community priorities, preferred locations, and comfort levels with different service models before considering next steps.

## Discussion:

### Method

An online survey was open to the public from February 9 to March 2, 2026. The City promoted the survey through a broad range of channels, including its website, social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Reddit and LinkedIn), print materials, and radio advertisements on four local stations at both the start and close of the survey period. Additional outreach included a media release, posters displayed at 14 downtown service organizations and businesses, outreach to Downtown Prince George and the Chamber of Commerce, and a feature in the Super Citizens digital newsletter. Paper copies of the survey were also made available at the City Hall Service Centre. There were 91,543 impressions across the 4 social media platforms (the number of times our content entered a person's screen), 562 social media interactions (commenting, sharing, reacting, or saving), two emails to the City's GetInvolved email (appendix C), 3,060 web page views and 1,512 survey responses.

While these efforts were intended to reach a broad audience, participation was voluntary and the results reflect the perspectives of those who chose to respond; as such, the findings may not fully represent all user groups, particularly individuals who rely most heavily on public washroom access.

### Survey Summary

The survey consisted of seven questions seeking input on perceived need, preferred locations, potential delivery models, design considerations, and whether the City should prioritize funding for both installation and ongoing operations. The questions and results are available in Appendix A. Respondents include people who regularly visit, work, access services, or live downtown, indicating that many participants are regularly in the area. Survey responses indicate a divided public perspective. A slim majority (51.59%) of respondents indicated that more publicly accessible washrooms are needed downtown, and 42.99% of respondents felt additional facilities are not necessary. The remaining 5.42% were not sure.

Map responses most frequently identified washroom location preferences along or adjacent to the 3rd Avenue corridor, with clusters near Quebec Street (Farmers' Market), George Street, and several City-owned properties including the 2nd Avenue parking lot, Canada Games Plaza and civic core, Wood Innovation Square, and City Hall. When asked about preferred approaches, responses were evenly distributed across several options. Integrating a public washroom into an existing civic facility open year-round received the most support (24.4%), followed closely by a staffed washroom at Canada Games Plaza (22.6%). Other options included a durable standalone structure such as a Portland Loo (17.6%) and delivery through partnerships with a downtown service provider (12.6%).

When asked which factors are most important in the design and operation of a downtown public washroom, respondents strongly prioritized cleanliness and maintenance (80.09%) and safety (75.66%). Other commonly selected factors included staffing and monitoring (44.31%), year-round access (40.15%), and cost to the City (37.96%). These results suggest that respondents' views are shaped not just whether a washroom exists, but by how well it is run.

Nearly a quarter of respondents (22.76%) selected "Other" when asked for feedback on preferred washroom approaches. A review of the open-ended responses shows that many respondents used the comment box to reiterate their opposition to installing a public washroom downtown. Among those who provided suggestions, feedback focused less on proposing entirely new delivery models and more on identifying conditions that would support successful implementation. Common

concerns related to safety, vandalism, drug use, and ongoing maintenance costs, with several respondents emphasizing that any facility would require close monitoring or staffing to remain clean and safe. A smaller number of responses suggested alternative approaches, such as using existing civic facilities, installing temporary or lower-cost structures, or partnering with businesses or service providers. Some respondents also framed the issue more broadly, noting that washroom access is connected to larger challenges related to homelessness, addiction, and downtown conditions, and expressed the view that one washroom alone would not address these underlying issues.

Survey responses regarding funding priorities also reflect divided views. When asked whether the City should prioritize construction and ongoing funding for a downtown public washroom, 32.41% responded yes, 42.39% said no, and 21.76% indicated that it depends on the cost. The costing results should be considered alongside the broader context of the survey. While a majority indicated comfort with installation costs of up to \$250,000, respondents also expressed strong preferences for staffing, monitoring, year-round access, and other features that would likely increase costs. This suggests that cost preferences alone may not fully reflect what the community expects from a functional facility.

### Other Responses

Like the survey itself, the online commentary on this subject also reflects a polarized discussion. Some residents expressed support based on accessibility, public health, and the needs of families, workers, seniors, and individuals with medical conditions, and noted potential benefits for downtown cleanliness and usability. Others raised concerns related to safety, vandalism, misuse, operating and capital costs, and overall taxpayer value. A significant number of comments were conditional in nature, suggesting that any facility would require features such as monitoring, regular cleaning, self-cleaning or automated models, user fees, limited hours, or pilot testing, and several commenters linked the issue to broader concerns about homelessness, addictions, and downtown conditions. Social media comments have been added to Appendix B.

### Next Steps:

Administration suggests the following as possible next steps:

**Option 1 - Receive for Information:** Maintain status quo, with no capital funding allocated for a new downtown public washroom project and no additional operating funding incorporated into future budgets, maintaining existing publicly accessible facilities and revisiting the matter in a future budget cycle if directed by Council.

**Option 2 - Proceed with planning and report back:** Identify a preferred approach which could include new infrastructure and/or utilizing existing facilities, and direct administration to return to Council with capital and operating cost estimates, including installation, maintenance, monitoring, location, and lifecycle considerations, for Council's consideration as a funded capital project in the 2027 budget cycle.

**Option 3 - Proceed with funding: Direct staff to add as a funded project incorporated into the proposed 2027 capital plan** the design and installation of a permanent downtown public washroom, with annual operating funding incorporated into future budgets.

Should Council opt for Option 1 or 2, staff will conduct targeted engagement with businesses and agencies downtown on the installation of a public washroom. Given the range of feedback already received and previous research and engagement conducted by staff, no further public engagement is recommended at this time.

### Summary and conclusion:

This report summarizes what we heard through the Downtown Prince George Public Washroom Survey and outlines options for Council's consideration. While most survey respondents agree that more

publicly available washrooms are needed downtown, views on approach remain divided and closely tied to concerns about safety, cleanliness, long term management, and cost. Central locations and integration within existing civic buildings were the most supported approaches to meet the need. Council is now asked to consider the engagement results and determine whether to pursue further costing, proceed with funding, or maintain the current level of service.

Respectfully submitted:

Eric Depenau, Director of Administrative Services

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Approved:

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Meeting date: 2026/04/13