

October 10, 2019

To: Members  
Community and Protective Services Committee

Re: Downtown Public Washrooms

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**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That funding of \$20,000 be requested through the 2020 budget process for a one-season pilot project to test stand-alone public washrooms in the downtown.
2. That item CPS19-7 be removed from the List of Outstanding Items.
3. That this report be forwarded to the October 28, 2019 meeting of City Council for approval.

**CONCLUSION**

Administration has conducted research to explore options and high-level costs to provide a stand-alone washroom facility in the downtown. This research has involved developing an inventory of public washrooms in Regina, surveying several municipalities in Western Canada to learn about their experiences, and consulting with the Regina Downtown Business Improvement District (RDBID).

The costs for the design, construction, operation and maintenance are difficult to determine without a clear understanding of the facility scale, who the proposed facility is meant to serve, hours of operation, maintenance levels and location. Preliminary research suggests the capital costs could be as high as \$750,000. Administration heard from several municipalities that operations and maintenance of these facilities is challenging, due to a high level of vandalism and illegal behavior. As such, Administration is recommending that a pilot project be undertaken to install a temporary washroom facility on the plaza for May through September of 2020. Administration would then report back to Council on the results of this pilot project before investing further in the design and servicing assessment for a permanent facility.

Administration's conversations with other municipalities has revealed that the provision of this service is typically funded through property tax revenue. Should the pilot project be successful, and Council decide to construct a permanent facility, Administration will further explore the availability of partnership opportunities.

**BACKGROUND**

With the continued support of the Regina Downtown Business Improvement District (RDBID), as well as other community-based organizations, day-to-day use, programming and events in the downtown have increased over the last decade. In response to this increased activity and a

perceived demand for additional public washroom facilities, at the April 11, 2019 meeting of Community and Protective Services Committee, the following motion was passed:

*“That Administration return to the Community and Protective Services Committee in Q3 2019 with a report on the capital and operational costs of both a seasonal and year-round downtown washroom facility, that identifies various sources of funding and partnership opportunities related to the building and maintenance of such a facility.”*

## **DISCUSSION**

In response to the motion, Administration has undertaken the following work:

- Inventory of public washrooms available in Regina;
- Survey of several western Canadian municipalities to gather background information on their provision of public washrooms, including capital and operating/maintenance costs;
- Development of options for moving forward to further explore this topic.

The following sections present: (A) an overview of the research collected, (B) options for moving forward, and (C) Administration’s recommended path forward, including a brief discussion on funding and partnership opportunities.

### **A. Research Summary – Inventory of Public Washrooms and Survey Results**

#### **Inventory of Public Washrooms in Regina**

Situated in parks, open spaces, Wascana Centre and a variety of free-to-access public facilities, such as municipal buildings, recreation centres, libraries, museums, art galleries, and hospitals there are more than 50 public access washroom facilities throughout the City of Regina (see map, Appendix A).

Two of these facilities, City Hall and the main branch of the Regina Public Library, are in the downtown. Since 2012, the City and the Library have had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place (Appendix D) ensuring public access to the Library’s washrooms regardless of whether the users are library patrons or not. The MOU was put in place to help support increased activity throughout the downtown in general and on the City Square specifically.

One of the features of Regina’s downtown is its compact and walkable form. The following chart lists walking distances and times from the library to locations around downtown:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Walking Time (1.4m/s)</b>
Broad and Saskatchewan Drive	900m	11 min
Albert and Saskatchewan Drive	550m	6.5 mins
Albert and 13 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	650m	7.5 mins
Broad and 13 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	881m	10.5 mins
Geographic Centre of Downtown	74m	1 min
Victoria Park Playground	250m	3 mins
City Square Plaza	120m	1.5 mins
FW Hill Mall	310m	3.5 mins
11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue and Cornwall Street transit stops	290m	3.5 mins

### Survey Results - Public Washrooms in Other Municipalities

Administration reached out to 18 municipalities in western Canada to survey them on the provision of public washrooms in their cities, specifically in the downtown. The survey (Appendix B) resulted in ten responses. The intent of the survey was to document current practices in our region, and to specifically understand what type of washroom facilities were being provided in other municipalities, along with capital and operational costs of these facilities and any common issues with their operations and maintenance.

- All ten of the respondents (Appendix C) had multiple public washrooms in their downtowns, with the majority of these facilities located in year-round public buildings such as City Halls, recreation facilities, libraries, transit stations, galleries and museums
- Nine reported ongoing issues with illegal / illicit activity in their washrooms including vandalism, squatting, prostitution, drug sales and use as well as other forms of illegal behaviour
- Four reported having increased security patrols and maintenance activities in response to the unwanted activity
- Eight had at least one stand-alone washroom facility in parks or along road rights-of-way
- Nine reported that their washrooms were available during building hours similar to the current practice in Regina or roughly dawn to dusk for stand-alone facilities
- One (Victoria, BC) provides 24 hour access to some of their washroom facilities, with accompanying 24 hour on-site security.
- Five provided recent capital costs for stand-alone facilities which ranged from \$150,000 – \$750,000.

Administration also reached out to the Provincial Capital Commission (PCC) to enquire about the operation of stand-alone washrooms in Wascana Centre. The Wascana Centre washrooms are inspected several times per day and cleaned daily by an external contractor. The PCC reports experiencing challenges including vandalism, bad behaviour and cleanliness issues.

### Stand Alone & Self-Cleaning Toilets

The challenging issue of the provision of washroom facilities in urban areas has, over the past two decades, led to the development of stand-alone, self-cleaning toilets that can be installed in parks and road rights of way. The key purpose of these facilities is to reduce the level of maintenance and security typically required of such facilities, reducing costs and creating an opportunity for extended hours of operation. However, municipalities are still assessing the feasibility of this new option. For example, Lethbridge, AB, recently cancelled a pilot project of this nature due to high maintenance and operating costs. Instead, in the fall of 2019 Lethbridge will be opening a new transit hub which will include washrooms monitored by on-site security staff to replace their stand-alone facility. Edmonton opened a state-of-the-art public washroom building on Whyte Avenue in 2012, designed to be highly visible with glass walls and bright lighting. It too has been subject to the same forms of illegal behaviours reported in other municipalities.

While the physical needs of all washroom users are essentially the same, the design and location

of a public washroom have a large impact on who uses the facility. Similarly, maintenance levels also impact use as those people who can choose an alternate facility will likely do so if their perceptions of a facility's level of safety or cleanliness are less than optimal. As Edmonton found in a 2018 survey, *"there is a general preference to avoid using public washrooms among those who are able to access alternative facilities."*

## **B. Options for Exploring this Topic Further**

After considering the research results, Administration has determined that additional work is required to accurately assess capital and maintenance costs and has prepared three options for Council's consideration.

### **Option 1 – Status Quo**

As noted earlier in the report, the City currently has an MOU with the Regina Public Library for use of their washrooms during library hours. The Regina Public Library has indicated their willingness to renew this MOU with the City. The City could also augment this service by locating signage in strategic locations to let patrons in the downtown know that there are washrooms available at the library and at City Hall along with hours of operation. In the future, negotiations with developers for new developments in the downtown could explore the option of including public washrooms as partial fulfillment of a required amenity contribution agreement.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
No cost to the City, as washrooms at City Hall and the Regina Public Library are already being maintained and costs for signage could be absorbed in current budgets.	Some events in the downtown occur during times that the Library and City Hall are closed.
The distance to walk to the library is between 1 and 11 minutes depending on your location in the downtown.	Service levels are not expanded to meet perceived need.
With the addition of signage, patrons in the downtown will have a better understanding of where public washrooms are available.	

### **Option 2 – One Season Pilot Project, including Seasonal Comfort Station - \$ 20,000**

Consideration could be given to establishing a one-season pilot project to test the need, operational challenges and effectiveness of installing stand-alone washrooms in the downtown, similar to the seasonal comfort station (washroom trailer) installed on the plaza in 2018, by the RDBID. The project would involve installation of a single, leased, accessible comfort station from the beginning of May to the end of September, open from dawn to dusk and for extended hours during special events.

This approach will enable Administration to provide the expanded level of service without investing in a capital project, thereby enabling Council to consider the full benefits and implications of such a facility. Through the pilot project, Administration will aim to assess the need for the facility by tracking usage, assess undesirable behavior through regular checks, and assess the frequency and costs of maintaining the station to an acceptable public standard. The

\$20,000 cost is based on estimates collected from local service providers as well as internal maintenance data from other facilities.

It should be noted that, while the RDBID installed a comfort station on the plaza in 2018, it only provided limited access to the trailer to plaza user groups like the Farmers' Market via key access, or to the public under the supervision of RDBID staff during special events. At RDBID sponsored events an additional accessible port-a-potty was also brought in to provide universal access.

Pros	Cons
Provides an expanded level of service to address perceived need.	Will require the dedication of funding through the budget process for leases and operational costs.
Short term cost to the City is less than constructing a stand-alone washroom.	A seasonal comfort station pilot project is only a temporary solution to this issue.
Could be located directly on the City Square to serve events and park users.	
Allows the City to test the use of a facility before making a substantial capital investment; if the washroom is not successful, removal is more straight-forward than a permanent facility.	
A solution could be in place for the 2020 plaza season.	

### **Option 3 – Engage Third Party Consultants to Explore Need, Location, Servicing Requirements and Construction of Stand-Alone Facility – \$100,000**

In order to fully deliver accurate capital and operating costs of both seasonal and year round washroom facilities, exploration of potential locations, analysis of servicing requirements and architectural designs are required. Consequently, this option involves engaging a design team to explore location, servicing requirements and construction/operating costs for a two stall, all gender, accessible washroom that is both seasonal as well as year-round. The estimate for this work is based on similar work undertaken over the past two years in relation to the construction of the pavilion on the plaza.

Pros	Cons
Provides information needed to assess the feasibility of establishing a stand-alone facility to meet perceived demand for washroom facilities.	Will require the dedication of \$100,000 in funding through the budget process prior to beginning the planning process.
	Construction of a permanent facility would likely not be complete until the summer / fall of 2022; installation of a seasonal comfort station in the interim may be necessary in the interim if Council wishes to expand service levels immediately.

### **C. Recommended Path Forward**

Administration's discussions with other municipalities have revealed that there is additional work to undertake before fully understanding the implications of adding a stand-alone washroom facility to the downtown. While cost estimates ranged from \$150,000 to \$750,000, depending on design and servicing requirements, a more accurate estimate can only be determined by undertaking design work and by studying the servicing requirements and location.

Given the perceived demand for a stand-alone facility, Administration is recommending that Option 2, a one-year seasonal pilot project, be considered through the 2020 budget process. This pilot project would involve installation of temporary facilities along with monitoring and maintenance as appropriate. Through the pilot project, Administration will aim to assess the need for the facility by tracking usage, assess undesirable behavior through regular checks, and assess the frequency and costs of maintaining the station to an acceptable public standard. The RDBID is in support of this option, and would support the project by having their staff check in on the facility while working on the plaza.

With respect to potential partnerships and funding, Administration's conversations with other municipalities has revealed that the provision of this service is typically funded through property tax revenue. Should the pilot project be successful, and Council decide to construct a permanent facility, Administration will further explore the availability of partnership opportunities. In the interim, the RDBID will continue to work with Administration to explore a long-term solution; the Regina Public Library has agreed to continue to support the MOU currently in existence by allowing the public to access its washrooms during its operating hours.

### **RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Financial Implications**

Administration is recommending that an investment of \$20,000 be considered through the 2020 budget process to undertake a pilot project involving the temporary installation of leased washroom facilities. This funding request also contains contingency funds if additional cleaning and security is required. Cost estimates are based on requests for information from local service providers, along with feedback from Facilities Operations and reported experience from adjacent municipalities.

#### **Environmental Implications**

None with respect to this report.

#### **Policy and/or Strategic Implications**

While the provision of public washrooms is not specifically referenced in *Design Regina, The Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2013-48* (OCP), or the Regina Downtown Neighborhood Plan (RDNP) such facilities are intended to contribute to quality of life in the City and to support

the activation of the downtown, helping to create a complete, liveable, healthy, accessible, inclusive community for all of Regina's residents and visitors.

#### Other Implications

None with respect to this report

#### Accessibility Implications

Administration is recommending an accessible comfort station.

#### COMMUNICATIONS

As part of this report, Administration reached out to the Regina Public Library to update the existing MOU for the provision of public access to the library's washroom facilities, which was originally signed in 2012 (Appendix D). Following the updating of the MOU Administration plans to place signs (Appendix E) in various locations on the City Square and throughout downtown directing people in need to the existing facilities both at the library and at City Hall.

A review of service requests regarding washrooms throughout the City from 2012-2019 revealed that the majority of service requests regarding washrooms were for maintenance/repairs, cleaning, graffiti removal and requests for additional access to existing facilities in parks, and facilities, typically in the spring and fall. Since 2012, no requests have been received by Administration for the establishment of additional public washrooms anywhere in the city.

#### DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The recommendation contained within this report requires City Council approval.

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie Shalley, Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

Respectfully submitted,



Diana Hawryluk, Executive Director, City Planning & Community Dev.

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