



REPORT FOR ACTION

Update on Park Washrooms for Winter 2020/2021

Date: November 18, 2020

To: City Council

From: General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to the request for the General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation ("PFR") to report back to the November 25 and 26 meeting of City Council on options for keeping park washrooms open and accessible, including clearing pathways of snow and ice, through the upcoming winter. In addition, it provides preliminary information on the potential to retrofit park washrooms to withstand freezing temperatures and remain open year-round.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in heavy use of parks and outdoor spaces during the summer months. Given the current public health advice to limit trips outside the home to essential activities only, including fresh air and exercise, it is expected that this higher use will continue through the colder months.

There are a total of 187 park washrooms across the city. The majority of these washrooms are not winterized, and are open between May and October. Out of these, typically 17 are kept open year-round. In addition, during outdoor rink season, the public can access washrooms at outdoor artificial ice rinks between late-November and March, weather permitting.

Given the resurgence of COVID-19 in Toronto and the associated increased need for access to outdoor space through the winter months, staff have determined that an additional 28 park washrooms can be kept open. Additionally, portable toilets will be deployed to 51 high-use locations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The cost of expanding winter washroom access, including the rental and cleaning of portable toilets and opening additional washrooms, is approximately \$1,030,000, including \$0.3 million in 2020 and \$0.7 million in 2021. The additional costs in 2020 can be accommodated within the 2020 Approved Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation. Financial impacts for 2021 will be submitted as part of the 2021 Budget Process for consideration.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On October 27, 2020, City Council adopted item HL22.1 with the amendment: "1. City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry, and Recreation to report back to the November 25 and 26, 2020 meeting of City Council on the impacts of, and options for, keeping more public washrooms open and fully accessible including clearing pathways of snow and ice in our parks through the upcoming winter."

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL22.1>

On October 27, 2020, City Council adopted item HL22.1 with the following amendment: "City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry, and Recreation to evaluate the potential to retrofit all public washrooms to ensure they can withstand winter temperatures and remain open year-round."

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL22.1>

On October 18, 2020, the Board of Health adopted HL22.1 "Response to COVID-19: Update on Resurgence."

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-157451.pdf>

COMMENTS

Seasonal Washrooms

Seasonal washrooms were not designed or constructed for winter use, and are typically open between May and October. These buildings range in age, with some built as early as the 1950s. Generally, seasonal park washrooms lack insulated plumbing, and sufficient electrical for heating of the building. These washrooms must be closed before temperatures drop below zero, resulting in damage to the pipes from freezing and bursting.

In many cases, the water supply for seasonal park washrooms comes from the irrigation system in the park, which is susceptible to freezing and is shut off in late fall to prevent damage. The water pipes to these washrooms are often found on the external walls of

the building, and/or exposed inside the washroom. The electrical supply panels are generally either insufficient or nonexistent in seasonal park washrooms.

To prepare these assets for winter, Parks staff also blow out the lines, dismantle the fixtures, and apply anti-freeze in the toilets, drainage and fixtures. For this reason, it is difficult to reopen washrooms temporarily when unseasonably warm weather occurs.

Year-Round Washrooms

Park washrooms intended for winter use were designed and constructed with the necessary infrastructure to enable them to function safely through freezing temperatures. These washrooms can remain open twelve months of the year.

In order for a park washroom to remain open year-round, the following infrastructure must be in place:

Plumbing: Pipes must not be exposed, and water lines to the building must be buried in the ground below the frost line.

Heat and Insulation: A reliable heat source for the inside of building. The heat source must be supported by sufficient electrical and insulation.

Electrical: The electrical source must be sufficient to power not only the new heating system but other features in the washroom as well.

PFR typically keeps 17 park washrooms open through the winter.

Winter 2020 / 2021

The resurgence of COVID-19 in Toronto as winter approaches has generated the need to consider how to provide additional washrooms to support the public's outdoor use of City parks. In response to the request to report back to Council, staff have determined that in addition to the 17 winterized washrooms, a further 28 washrooms can remain open this season. These additional locations were inspected to ensure they can remain open without damage to the infrastructure, and in some cases minor retrofits were made to support winter use. The expanded locations include washrooms at golf courses, fieldhouses and stadiums that are not normally kept open through winter months.

To further support the winter use of parks this season, portable toilets will be provided at 51 locations where enhanced snow clearing is planned, and to support district or high-use parks. The deployment of portable toilets has already begun in a number of locations with high use.

Once outdoor artificial ice rinks (AIRs) are operational, typically from late-November to March, the public will be able to access washrooms at 47 outdoor rinks. Washrooms at community recreation centres, many of which are adjacent to or near parks, are also available to the public.

The following table provides an overview of expanded park washroom access for the coming winter:

	Year-round park washrooms	AIR washrooms (Late November - mid March, weather permitting)	Portable washroom locations	Total park washrooms available in winter
Prior years	17	47	0	64
Winter 2020/2021	45	47	51	143

Snow clearing will take place at all locations with washrooms this season, including the additional park washrooms remaining open this season, portable washroom locations, and AIRs.

The cost of this expanded washroom access for the 2020/2021 season is approximately \$1,030,000, including \$0.3 million in 2020 and \$0.7 million in 2021.

Seasonal Washroom Condition Assessment and Feasibility Studies

In order to facilitate the retrofit or winterization of seasonal park washrooms, an assessment and inspection of each park washroom would be required. Each seasonal park washroom is a unique building with varying as-built conditions, whose retrofit or winterization would need to be evaluated. The condition assessment and feasibility study would review criteria such as the size of the building, the location of piping, the availability of an appropriately sized hydro service, and the determination of the location for an electrical panel to support the addition of a dedicated heat source.

Staff typically retain engineering or building science professional services to conduct condition assessments and develop design solutions. General contractors are then retained based on a competitive tendering process. Alternate delivery models such as non-competitive procurement, design-build contracts, or the use of in-house staff resources to complete the work could be considered in consultation with the Purchasing and Materials Management Division and/or through Council direction.

For any major renovation to a park washroom, the City would need to consider compliance with the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG) and include funding for accessibility to meet provincial requirements and standards. The preparation of a cost estimate would be informed by a condition assessment along with accessibility requirements. PFR staff will advance the condition and feasibility study assessment in

2021 and report out on the funding requirements through the 2022 Capital and Operating Budget.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS
