



Park People / Amis des parcs
401 Richmond St. W. Ste 119
Toronto, Ontario, M5V 3A8
416-583-5776
info@parkpeople.ca
www.parkpeople.ca

October 25, 2021

Re: IE25.11 Improving Winter Access to Toronto's Parks for 2021-22

Dear Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Park People is writing in support of staff recommendations to enhance winterized washroom access in parks and to clear more areas around parks and along trails in winter. If this work was critical before, it's even more important coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic where Toronto, along with many other Canadian cities, saw an increase in parks usage. This includes during the winter with people seeking safe outdoor options to tend to their physical and mental health.

Clearing trails of snow and ice increases the accessibility of parks for everyone and encourages people to continue to use parks and trails for winter recreation. Similarly, increasing the amount of winterized washroom facilities increases the comfort and accessibility of park facilities during the winter for more people.

From our [Canadian City Parks Report](#), which was released in June 2021, we published the results of a survey of over 3,500 Canadians that took place in April 2021. A few of the results are instructive on the importance of winter access to parks and washrooms specifically:

- **Canadians support more funding for parks, specifically for maintenance.**
 - 85% of Canadians said they support more public funding for parks, with 43% of respondents specifically saying that maintenance was their highest priority.
- **Winter park use soared during the pandemic, and many Canadians report that they see this high use continuing.**
 - 50% of Canadians said they used parks more during the winter in the pandemic, and 73% of these respondents expect this winter use to continue or even increase.
- **Trail use and walking in parks was important to people's use of parks.**
 - 60% of Canadians say they prefer to visit parks with trails.
- **Winter washroom access has broad support**
 - Of pandemic related parks improvements, 57% of Canadians say they want more winterized washrooms in parks as a permanent feature.



We would also call on the city to:

- **Increase the hours at many of the current public washrooms**, some of which close at times when park use is still high leaving people without options for washrooms. Currently washrooms are open from 9am to “dusk” which in the winter may leave people without an option in the early evenings.
- **Extend the operating hours of washrooms beyond the typical season**, even for non-winterized washrooms. Currently, the season for park washrooms is approximately mid-April to mid-October. The city should review average temperatures to extend this season given that Toronto doesn’t see days below freezing for a longer period of time than the current washroom schedule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Harvey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dave Harvey
Executive Director, Park People

