



March 25, 2025

Mayor Olivia Chow and City Councillors
City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Olivia Chow and City Councillors,

We, the undersigned, request the City of Toronto take immediate action in **winterizing stand-alone washrooms** across Toronto. In addition, we urge the city to create a **comprehensive washroom strategy** that encompasses multiple municipal departments in order to create a network of accessible city-wide public washrooms.

Access to safe and dignified sanitation is a basic human right. Despite being a global city, Toronto falls far short in providing enough public washrooms to serve its over three million residents and visitors. The lack of public washroom access **severely impacts many people's ability to move** around the city, such as people with chronic illnesses, older adults, and families with young children. Public washrooms are an essential resource for our unhoused and underhoused community members who have no private space of their own and must rely on public facilities to meet their basic needs. Moreover, the lack of washroom facilities has been linked to outbreaks of diseases, while the addition of public washrooms has been found to reduce public defecation and human waste in surrounding areas. Finally, public washrooms are crucial for delivery and gig workers who often cannot easily return home or are required to make a purchase to use facilities in stores.

The City of Toronto has long relied on private businesses to provide washrooms in areas of the city underserved by public facilities. Nevertheless, having disposable income should not be the determining factor for access to safe, clean, and accessible washrooms. This is especially a barrier for folks who are low income or unhoused. Relatedly, racialized people are not equally welcome to use washrooms in private establishments. The best washroom is simply the one closest to you when you need to go. The American Restroom Association recommends a

maximum spacing of 500 meters, so city-dwellers would be within a five to ten minute walking distance from a washroom at any time. Toronto falls extremely short of reaching this goal, especially outside of the downtown core.

While making immediate moves to address the basic lack of public sanitation infrastructure is necessary, it is also essential that the city develop a long-term strategy that responds to demographic shifts and growing sustainability concerns. A comprehensive public washroom strategy will provide a vision and design basis for ensuring washrooms are inclusive to all people, are spaces that promote harm reduction, and can take into account carbon neutrality and water-saving technology. While the city has made some strides in recent years, the majority of these improvements have fallen on the Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Department to maintain and improve its washrooms. Public washrooms are a city-wide issue that requires the attention of multiple departments and a variety of different perspectives.

To build a more inclusive and equitable city, the City of Toronto must invest in infrastructure that supports basic human needs such as public washrooms. Winterizing existing washrooms and creating a plan for network expansion will go a long way to improve the health, safety, and well-being of residents and visitors.

Sincerely yours,

Toronto Public Space Committee
8 80 Cities
All Saints Church Community Centre
Bicycle Mayor of Toronto
Canary District Neighbourhood Association
Charlie's FreeWheels
Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
Clay and Paper Theatre
Cyan Station Architecture
Cycle Don Valley Midtown
David Suzuki Foundation
East Enders Against Racism
Eglinton Park Residents Association
Encampment Support Network Parkdale
Federation of North Toronto Residents Associations (FoNTRA)
Friends and Families for Safe Streets
Garment District Neighbourhood Association
Geary West Art Crawl

Gig Workers United
Global Walkability Correspondents Network (GWCN) - Toronto Area Chapter
Green Majority Radio
High Park Rogue Runners
Jay Pitter Placemaking
Junction Residents Association
Leaside United Church Outreach Committee
LeuWebb Projects
Midtown Ravines Group
More Transit Southern Ontario
Muslims in Public Space
New Toronto - Lakeshore Village Residents' Association
Oakwood Vaughan Community Organization
Our Greenway Conservancy
Park People
Plaza Pops
Progress Toronto
Public Washrooms TO
Regent Park Community Ministry
Saddle Sisters of High Park
South Forest Residents Association
SPH Associates
STEPS Public Art
The Annex Residents Association
The Bentway
The Centre for Active Transportation
The Laneway Project
Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee
Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition
TTC Riders
Uma Nota
Urban Minds
Walk Toronto
Women in Urbanism Canada
Yonge4All