

Are Public Toilets Safe? A Study of Issues Raised and Successful Models

**MARIA DOIRON
GOTTAGO! CAMPAIGN**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
SAFETY CONCERNS.....	3
FEAR OF VIOLENCE.....	3
SUBSTANCE ABUSE	5
SANITATION/ CLEANLINESS	6
WHAT PLACES WITH PUBLIC TOILETS HAVE DONE TO ADDRESS CONCERNS.....	8
DESIGN ELEMENTS.....	8
<i>Montreal Self Cleaning Toilets.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Portland Loo</i>	<i>11</i>
STAFFING	13
<i>Winnipeg Pop Up Toilet Pilot.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Whyte Avenue Public Toilet (Staffed Pilot Project).....</i>	<i>17</i>
VISIBILITY IN COMMUNITY.....	20
<i>Bluenose Lunenburg Public Washroom</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Bryant Park Public Restroom</i>	<i>23</i>
IMPORTANCE.....	25

Introduction

This report will discuss some common safety concerns surrounding public toilets: fears of violence, substance use and sanitation. It will analyze what other cities' public toilet infrastructure have done that address these concerns. It will conclude that when public toilets are openly discussed and planned for in a community without stigmatization, safe public washrooms can emerge.

Emptying bladders and bowels is a shared activity among all humans, so why do our cities lack the public toilet infrastructure to meet this vital need? Public toilets improve the health and accessibility of our communities by providing dignified spaces to carry out a common biological function. Some people avoid entire areas of their community when there are no public washrooms available (Kitchin & Law, 2001), so the presence of public toilets (or lack of) significantly impacts people's daily lives.

Yet, all public toilets are not the same; a frequent discussion surrounding the proposals of public toilets in a community concerns the safety of these facilities. These opinions are important and must be addressed by communities at every stage when planning to build new public toilets. Safe public toilets in cities worldwide can and do exist. Notable places with exceptional public toilets include Tokyo, Singapore, and New Zealand (among many others). Some of their innovative designs include transparent to opaque colour-changing walls to ensure people can see that the bathroom they are entering is empty and safe. Canadian cities can and should take inspiration from these cities in designing a network of safe, inclusive, and clean public toilets that meet people's needs and can withstand our diverse weather.

In 2013 a group of citizens recognized Ottawa's need for a network of clean, safe and accessible public toilets and formed the GottaGo! Campaign. Since then, the GottaGo! Campaign continues its advocacy through public awareness campaigns, including pressuring the City of Ottawa to include public toilets in the recently built LRT node stations. Through these efforts, GottaGo! has gained strong community support from citizens and associations/groups who share the common desire for a network of public toilets in Ottawa and who encourage the City to include these facilities in its policy/budget. Ottawa is currently planning to build two

permanent public toilets, one on Sparks St., the other in the Byward Market. Both of these are high pedestrian traffic areas. The GottaGo! Campaign encourages the City to take inspiration from other successful public toilets to produce/create/build safe, clean and accessible public toilets that citizens and visitors feel comfortable using.

An intersectional feminist approach guides this report and is used to examine the information being discussed. Intersectional feminism is a theoretical approach created by Kimberlé Crenshaw to examine how overlapping inequalities simultaneously impact a person's lived experiences (). GottaGo! has chosen to use this approach because, in our experience, women and marginalized peoples (disabled, LGBTQ+ etc.) face the most significant disparities by not having good public toilet infrastructure and commonly express safety concerns.

Safety Concerns:

Fear of Violence:

The fear of being a target for violence is a concern that women discuss as a barrier to feeling safe using a public toilet (Hartigan et al., 2020). The primary concern regarding safety for women is fear of assault inside, on their way to and from a public toilet (Hartigan et al., 2020). These fears are not exclusive to public toilets; it reflects a societal need to make women feel safe interacting in a city. Violence against women is an issue that cities must address in all areas, including public toilets. It is vital to ensure that women are and feel safe in public spaces. Creating a network of safe public toilets is part of addressing violence against women.

These feelings toward public toilets can stem from previous experiences of feeling unsafe while using a public toilet but women who have never experienced any previous incidents in public toilets also describe similar feelings (Hartigan et al., 2020). These data indicates that women's fears of assault in public toilets stem either from personal experiences and from the perception of risk in a public toilet.

The rhetoric that public toilets are dangerous spaces is something that GottaGo! regularly sees in the media. Many people use these facilities in cities with public toilets without any incident, but when one does occur, it makes headlines. For example, doing a google search about public toilets will bring up many negative news stories about them, but few on the positive stories of their benefits. Publishing stories that overwhelmingly highlight crime is not exclusive to public toilets; it happens in general with urban crimes (The John Howard Society of Canada, 2019). The John Howard Society writes that only 7% of crimes in Canada are violent, but 50% of stories published by media are about violent crime (The John Howard Society of Canada, 2019). It discusses how these stories influence the number of crimes people perceive is happening (The John Howard Society of Canada, 2019). How safe people think public toilets are, regardless of statistics, impacts if and how they choose to use them (The John Howard Society of Canada, 2019). Therefore, public toilets must be safe and appear safe to society.

Transgender, non-binary and other people who do not conform to traditional gender expressions also express fears of violence in public toilets. Since many publicly available toilets are gendered, these groups of people must pick a gender to perform in public that others will witness (Ramster, Greed, & Bichard, 2018). For those who are not cisgender, gendered washrooms can put them in vulnerable positions. A study by Stonewall found that 48% of transgender people are not comfortable using public toilets because they fear violence (Ramster, Greed, & Bichard, 2018).

There are many instances where gender non-conforming people experience their gender being policed in public toilets, in both male and female bathrooms (Lorber, 2012). This gender policing extends so far that even some cisgender people have experienced their gender being questioned or challenged in public toilets (Lorber, 2012). There is clear concern from transgender, non-binary, and other gender non-conforming people about their safety in public toilets. Communities building public toilets must consider these vulnerable groups experiences in order to provide safe public toilets.

Substance Use

Another concern in the discussion about public toilets is the fear that substance users will use and abuse these facilities. Many negative opinions about substance users are common among the general public. When considering public toilets and safety, it is a valid concern that substance users in a community might use in a public toilet and/or leave needles in them. Communities cannot ignore concerns surrounding needle disposal because they can risk spreading infections/diseases if done improperly.

Public toilets do not create public substance use; they are just one of the many public spaces that might be an option for substance users (Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019). When concerns about public toilets as spaces for substance use occur, an underlying issue is public substance use. Community concerns over public substance use are valid and are an issue that cities/communities must address.

Rather than removing or avoiding having public toilets for fear of substance use, communities can take steps to make these facilities a safer place. However, communities need to take other steps to reduce public substance use (De Beck et al., 2009). Studies have found the most successful strategy to minimize public substance use is to take a public health-based approach to address it (De Beck et al., 2009; Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019). This approach proves especially effective compared to the criminalization and punishment of substance (Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019). One health-based approach to reducing public substance use is having Supervised injection sites (SIS) in a community (Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019). These sites have proven to minimize public substance use and provide a safe and enclosed area for people to use substances (Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019). SIS are effective alternatives to having people using substances in public; the strongest risk factor for using substances in public is having no private space to do this (Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019). By offering private areas for substance use, SIS reduces people from using in the public realm (De Beck et al., 2009). These sites facilitate a safer community for everyone (Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019).

Wanting to feel safe in a public bathroom is a valid concern, and communities cannot ignore the possibility of having substance use happening in these facilities. Many possible ways to address this can and have been used in public toilet designs. Some examples include having needle disposal boxes inside toilets to promote safe use or blue lights to discourage use.

Sanitation/Cleanliness

Sanitation-related concerns also come up in discussions about public toilets. When many people think of public toilets, they associate them with being dirty or unclean, which causes them genuine concern about using these facilities. Public toilets must offer a safe and clean space to use the washroom. Many different methods are used in public toilet designs to ensure they remain sanitary, such as self-cleaning toilets or dedicated attendants to consistently clean.

People who use women's restrooms most often make these comments, and there are a couple of reasons for this (Hartigan et al., 2020). A significant reason for this is that women tend to use the bathroom more often than men (Anthony & Dufresne, 2007). Most women are the primary caretaker of children who take them to the toilet (Greed, 2006; (Ramster, Greed, & Bichard, 2018). Many women are menstruating at any given time (Anthony & Dufresne, 2007). Most women need to sit down every time to use the toilet, whereas most men do not. These factors mean that women are also using more toilet paper and other sanitary products like tampons/pads and are more likely to be changing diapers as primary caretakers.

An elevated concern exists for people who must bring bags or items they cannot hold with them to the bathroom (purses, diaper bags, backpacks etc.) Without proper space to place these belongings, there is concern over putting them on a dirty bathroom floor. In focus groups, this impacted why people are concerned about sanitation in public toilets they enter (Hartigan et al., 2020). Additional concerns exist for people who might need more toilet space, such as pregnant people, disabled people, and larger-bodied people (Greed, 2006).

A general concern for sanitation also exists, especially with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people fear that public toilets are an easy place for this virus to spread; however as public toilet expert Lezlie Lowe explains, these facilities are not more likely to spread the virus than other small, enclosed spaces (such as elevators) (Goodyear, Raman-Wilms, & Lowe, 2020). Public toilets can be part of the public health response to limiting the spread of the virus because they are a space where people can clean germs off their hands (Greed, 2006).

In fact, not having public toilets risks spreading diseases that cause diarrhea and increase the risk of toxic shock syndrome, among other issues (Ramster, Greed, & Bichard, 2018; Greed, 2006). However, public toilets need to be sanitary to ensure the safety of their users. Sanitation is especially crucial for groups of people who have an elevated risk of infections. For example, people who use colostomy bags need clean spaces to safely change them (Greed, 2006).

What Places with Public Toilets have Done to Address Concerns:

Design Elements

Different design elements for public toilets exist that increase the safety of users. Some public toilet designs opt for simple mechanical elements to increase safety, such as louver grating that maintains users' privacy while allowing people to see if the toilet is in use.

Montreal Self- Cleaning Toilets

Montreal City, Montreal, Canada



Type of Toilet/How it Works:

The self-cleaning toilets are gender-neutral single-stall permanent stand-alone public toilets that operate all year from 6 am - 12 am. The toilets go through a 90-second cleaning cycle every time someone finishes using them (Scott, 2018). The toilet is free of charge to users, but officials have considered charging a small fee to reduce the number of people who open the doors to view the toilet since it must go through a cleaning cycle every time (Scott, 2018). After 15 minutes of use, the toilet doors open, and there is a 660-pound weight limit; both features

exist to prevent illegal activities (Jagger Haines, 2018). There are needle disposal boxes inside the toilets so people can dispose of needles safely (Deschamps, 2018).

Benefits:

- Cleaning cycle after each use and some also cleaned by crews twice daily, ensuring that the toilet is not dirty (Little, 2020).
- Gender-neutral single stalls promote a neutral environment where people of different gender identities can use the toilet without performing gender.

Limitations:

- Time limit on usage limits accessibility for those with disabilities or conditions (IBS, IBD, Crohn's Disease) who might surpass the time limit, thus opening the door and exposing a person in a vulnerable state.
- Time and weight limit said to reduce crime, but lacking data to verify these claims. When compared against the accessibility issues that arise from these limits, it is difficult to justify them.
- The weight limit for these toilets reduces accessibility for people with heavy mobility aids (i.e., electric wheelchairs) who might surpass this weight, and those with caretakers who need assistance using the toilet.
- The limited operation hours reduce its ability to serve all people who need a toilet.
- *Difficult to maintain in cool climates compared to other models of public toilets (Bruemmer, 2019).
- Costly compared to different public toilet designs.
- Some technical issues have occurred that decrease the experience, such as sensors not functioning correctly (Bruemmer, 2019).

Cost Analysis (CAD):

Initial Purchase	\$340,000
------------------	-----------

	(Bruemmer, 2019)
Installation	\$187,000 (Bruemmer, 2019)
Maintenance (Annually)	Approximately \$45,333 per year (Bruemmer, 2019)
Other Costs	N/A
Funding Source	N/A

Similar Public Toilets:

Vancouver Self-Cleaning Public Toilet:

These toilets have a similar structure and cost to the Montreal self-cleaning toilets. Similar technology issues have arisen, such as doors not functioning correctly and trapping a person inside, creating additional safety issues (Bhatty, 2011). Accessibility issues stem from an even lower time limit of 12 minutes to use the toilet until the door opens on a user. It is cost-effective because the city has an agreement with JCDecaux company that covers costs of installation and maintenance with the right to profit from advertisements on them (Scalza, 2011). For communities looking to install a public toilet that is cost-effective to them, this agreement can alleviate the cost to them.

Portland Loo

Portland, Oregon, United States



Type of Toilet/How it Works:

The Portland Loo is a permanent stand-alone public toilet with gender-neutral stalls for patrons to use. Some operate 24/7 year-round and can be customized to withstand cool winter climates. The toilet is free of charge to users.

Benefits:

- Affordable to purchase and maintain compared to other public toilet design options.
- Good ventilation helps keep the toilet from having a strong odour; the ventilation also helps ensure that fresh air circulates often (The Portland Loo, N/A).
- Good public/private balance: the grating at the top and bottom of the bathroom help users see if people are in the toilet before entering a stall (The Portland Loo, N/A).
- The toilet hours ensure that any person who needs to use the toilet can.

- The outer material is strong and durable to prevent damage to the toilet. It also has an anti-graffiti coating which prevents vandalism from occurring (The Portland Loo, 2017). The material is also easy to clean with a hose and regular supplies.
- Gender-neutral single stalls promote an environment where people of different gender identities can use the toilet without pressure to perform gender.

Limitations:

- Some features that exist to reduce certain behaviours, such as the blue lighting elements to deter substance usage, have proven ineffective when studied (Fozouni, Buchheit, Walley, Testa, & Chatterjee, 2019).
- Even with winterization elements, the grating/ventilation makes these toilets cold and not ideal for Canada’s harsh winter climate (City of Nelson Public Works and Utilities, 2017).
- Unclear how often these toilets are cleaned since there is no dedicated staff.

Cost Analysis (CAD):

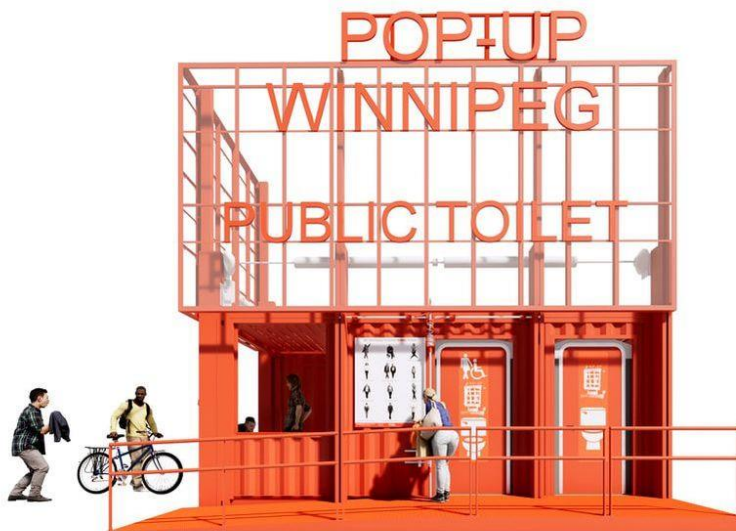
Initial Purchase	Unit: \$112,945 (additional costs if want features such a baby changing table, winterization etc.) Shipping: \$4,392- \$6,274 (The Portland Loo, 2017)
Installation	Utilities (water, sewage, electrical): \$27,608 - \$31,373 Foundation: \$8,784 - \$11, 294 Unit (labour costs, machines): \$3,764 - \$5,019 (The Portland Loo, 2017)
Maintenance (Annually)	\$13,804 - \$15,059 (The Portland Loo, 2017)
Other Costs	N/A
Funding Source	City purchases from PortlandLoo Company, option to install advertisements to generate revenue

Staffing

Some public toilets have opted to have staff present during operating hours to act as cleaners and monitors of the environment. Staffed public toilets have overwhelmingly shown to increase safety, sanitation and reduce illegal activities from occurring in the toilets (City of Edmonton, 2020; Day, 2021; Pindera, 2019).

Winnipeg Pop Up Toilet Pilot:

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



How it work/Type of Toilet:

The Winnipeg Pop Up Toilet is a temporary and moveable stand-alone public toilet with bathroom attendants present during its open hours. The attendants hired have lived experience as vulnerable people and are trained to provide support to vulnerable groups. The toilet is gender-neutral, and it operates from 7 am - 4 pm during warm months (until it is too cold to remain open) (Bernhardt, 2019). The toilet is free of charge to users.

Benefits:

- Located in a visible, well-trafficked area which means the toilet is easy to find, and users/people entering are visible to the public in the surrounding area.

- The attendants can ensure the toilet is consistently clean throughout the day, answer any questions/concerns users may have, and monitor the toilets to ensure they are safe (Pindera, 2019).
- Attendants can offer support to vulnerable populations, including referring users to counselling services. The attendants also serve as harm reduction workers (Pindera, 2019).

Limitations:

- The limited operation hours reduce its ability to serve all people who need a toilet.

Cost Analysis (CAD):

Total costs (including building, maintenance staffing etc.)	Approximately \$100,000 (St. Clair Bridgman & Bridgman, 2018)
Funding Source	Downtown Winnipeg BIZ (St. Clair Bridgman & Bridgman, 2018)

Similar Public Toilets:

Kelowna Pop up Public Toilets

These toilets have a similar build and staffing situation to Winnipeg. The attendants have helped refer vulnerable people to services they need, and illegal activities have been reduced, such as vandalism (Day, 2021). The attendants can ensure that toilets are consistently clean, and that people are not using illegal activities.

[Link for more information:](#)

<https://www.kelownacapnews.com/news/penticton-interested-in-new-public-washroom-concept-to-combat-vandalism/>

https://www.nowmediainc.com/watercooler/news/news/Kelowna/New_pop_up_washroom_opens_downtown_this_week/

San Francisco Pit Stop Program



These public toilets follow a similar structure to the toilets previously mentioned, including staffing to consistently clean toilets, support vulnerable people; some of their toilets operate for 24 hours a day, every day. These toilets are specifically designed to meet the needs of vulnerable and homeless people; however, everyone has benefited from these facilities because they help keep streets clean (Gordon).

User's report feeling safer using the staffed public toilets and perceive them as cleaner than before (Gordon, 2016).

Link for more information:

<https://sfpublicworks.wixsite.com/pitstop>

Cost Analysis (CAD):

Overall Annual Cost	\$250,000 (approximately) (Har, 2019)
Funding Source	<p>San Francisco Public Works manages the toilets, but it is unclear how all costs are funded.</p> <p>Non-profit organizations fund the staffing of the toilets:</p> <p>Hunters Point Family and Urban Alchemy employ formally incarcerated people as the attendant for the bathroom.</p> <p>Taking It to the Streets organization also employs people to staff the bathrooms.</p>

Whyte Avenue Public Toilet (Staffed Pilot Project)

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Type of Toilet/How it Works:

The Whyte Avenue Public Toilet is a permanent, free-standing public toilet with two-bathroom attendants present during its open hours, who receive a \$25 hourly wage (City of Edmonton, 2020). The attendants hired have lived experience as vulnerable people and are trained to provide support to toilet users, especially vulnerable groups. The toilet is gendered and has bathroom stalls for patrons to use and is open from 10 am - 1:30 am Sunday to Thursday, and hours are extended from 10 am - 3:30 am Friday and Saturday (City of Edmonton, 2020)

. The toilet is free of charge to users.

Benefits:

- The bathroom attendant positions provide living-wage jobs to members of the community.
- The attendants can ensure the toilet is consistently clean throughout the day, answer any questions/concerns users may have, monitor the toilets to ensure they are safe and provide supports to vulnerable populations (such as homeless people).
- Although the attendants cost the city more money, a study done by the city after the pilot show numerous benefits, including:
 - Reduced police presence;

-
- Reduced number of illegal incidents: Went down from 54 before the pilot to only 6 during the pilot;
 - Increased perception of safety;
 - Increased perception of cleanliness;
 - Increased positive perception of the public toilet;
 - Vulnerable people in the community reported feeling better supported;
 - **Overall increased usage by the public** (City of Edmonton, 2020).
 - The above benefits show that having the attendants overwhelmingly increased the positive experiences surrounding safety, sanitation, and reducing illegal activities. These benefits help make the city more inclusive, inviting, and livable.
 - Located in a visible, well-trafficked area which means the toilet is easy to find, and users/people entering are visible to the public in the surrounding area.

Limitations:

- The limited operation hours reduce its ability to serve all people who need a toilet outside of those hours.
- Gendered stalls could cause transgender and other gender non-conforming people to feel uncomfortable using this toilet. *there is no data explicitly reported on how transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming peoples' experience differed with the attendants. Based on the data above about perception of safety, we can infer that the attendants could reduce some of the hostility that might occur towards these groups of people.

Cost Analysis (CAD): Pilot Project:

Initial Purchase and Installation	\$726,389.17 (F. Sobernig, personal communication, March 3, 2021)
Maintenance (Over 6 months)	All costs: \$111,353.00 (including \$7,277 work orders) (City of Edmonton, 2020)
Other Costs	N/A
Funding Source	The municipal government

Cost Analysis (CAD) Before Staffing Pilot Project:

Initial Purchase	\$726,389.17 (F. Sobernig, personal communication, March 3, 2021)
Maintenance (Over 6 months)	Supplies: \$1,210 Staffing: \$3,446.00 Work Orders: \$21,976 Total: \$26,632 (City of Edmonton, 2020)
Other Costs	N/A
Funding Source	The municipal government

Visibility in Community:

Public toilet designs that choose to create visibly appealing structures that are easy to see and help increase the public perception of their safety (Lowe, 2018). These structures also tend to have generally positive attitudes towards them, reflected in the respectful way users treat these facilities.

Bluenose Lunenburg Public Washroom

Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada



Type of Toilet/How it Works:

The Bluenose Lunenburg Public Washroom is a permanent stand-alone public toilet that is centrally located in the town. The toilet is gendered and has bathroom stalls for patrons to use. It operates from 8 am - 9 pm from June – October, as Lunenburg is primarily a seasonal tourist town (Lowe, 2018). The toilet is free of charge to users.

Benefits:

- Located in a visible, well-trafficked area which means the toilet is easy to find, and users/people entering are visible to the public in the surrounding area.

- The appealing architecture and aesthetic elements such as the bench, landscaping, exterior bright paint hand-painted artwork by students promote an inviting and pleasurable experience (Lowe, 2018).
- As a result of its visually appealing theme, this public toilet is well used, and people are overwhelmingly respectful of the toilet (i.e., treating it nicely) (Lowe, 2018).
- Affordable to maintain compared to other public toilet design options; the facility was built over 20 years ago and has needed minimal upgrades (Lowe, 2018).
- The appealing architecture and aesthetic elements such as the artwork on the exterior and interior, and bright lights at night help promote an inviting experience.

Limitations:

- The limited operation hours reduce its ability to serve all people who need a toilet.
- As a tourist town the closure during November - May reduces its ability to serve all people who need a toilet off season.
- Gendered stalls could cause transgender and other gender non-conforming people to feel uncomfortable using this toilet.

Cost Analysis (CAD):

Initial Purchase and Installation	Estimated approximately \$120,000 - \$175,000. (P. Bracken, personal communication, March 9, 2021)
Maintenance (Annually)	Total: \$15,100 Cleaning services / supplies: \$8,800 Repairs and general maintenance: \$2,000 Electricity: \$1,100 Phone/Security: \$800 Sewage: \$500

	Insurance: \$400 (P. Bracken, personal communication, March 9, 2021)
Other Costs	N/A
Funding Source	The municipal government.

Bryant Park Public Restroom

New York City, New York, United States



Type of Toilet/How it Works:

The Bryant Park Public Toilet is a permanent, free-standing public toilet with bathroom attendants. The toilet is gendered and has bathroom stalls for patrons to use and is open from 7 am - 9 pm every day all year long. The toilet is free of charge to users.

Benefits:

- The appealing architecture and aesthetic elements such as the potted flowers, clean finishes, artwork, frosted windows, high-end fixtures, wall mirrors and music that plays inside promotes an inviting and pleasurable experience. Elements are so appealing that toilet serves as a tourist attraction (Schulman, 2017).
- As a result of its visually appealing theme, this public toilet is well used, and people are overwhelmingly respectful of the toilet (i.e., treating it nicely) (Lowe, 2018).
- The toilet attendants ensure the toilets are always kept clean and can address any issues as they occur.

Limitations:

- The limited operation hours reduce its ability to serve all people who need a toilet outside opening hours.

- This public toilet is expensive and privately funded by donors through the Bryant Park Corporation non-profit, which is not realistic for many communities/cities. Without outside funding, this model is not within the budget of many communities.
- Gendered stalls could cause transgender and other gender non-conforming people to feel uncomfortable using this toilet.
- Attendants do not receive a living wage.

Cost Analysis (USD)

Initial Purchase	N/A
Installation	N/A
Maintenance (Annually)	<p>Toilet paper: \$27,000</p> <p>Flower deliveries: \$14,160</p> <p>Bathroom attendants: \$25,000 - \$30,000* per year (each) *could not find how many employed (not paid a living wage)</p> <p>(Hu, 2017)</p>
Other Costs	<p>\$300,000 in upgrades in 2017</p> <p>(Hu, 2017)</p>
Funding Source	<p>Owned by the city but funded by private donors through Bryant Park Corporation non-profit organization.</p> <p>(Hu, 2017)</p>

Importance:

Communities need to consider several factors when deciding what design for a public toilet will most effectively address the community's needs. As shown in the examples above, clean, safe, accessible public toilets have measurable positive impacts on community members and users. It is critical to address safety concerns community members might have surrounding public toilets to work towards an inclusive community for all.

Some notable benefits from public toilets include:

Cleaner Cities/Communities:

When people have a safe space to use the toilet, the risks of having an accident in public or using other improper spaces as toilets (such as sidewalks, alleyways, or parks) decrease. Cities with a network of strong public toilets describe fewer reports of human feces and urine in their communities (Associated Press, 2019; Greed, 2006). This infrastructure provides more than aesthetic benefits; it reduces disease transmission risk from fecal matter. The San Francisco Pit Stop Program is one example of this, with community members reporting more satisfaction because there is less human waste in public spaces (Associated Press, 2019). Having less human waste reduces the burden and cost on cities who must send workers to clean the streets when there is waste on the streets.

Increased Accessibility:

All people need access to a toilet, but some groups have an elevated need where their body has a desperate, immediate to find a toilet when they need to go. Children, seniors, pregnant people, disabled people, and those with certain bowel diseases/disorders cannot wait; they must quickly access a toilet or risk having an accident. These people must plan their outings around access a toilet when needed (Lowe, 2018). When certain parts of a community do not have readily available public toilets, it can be a barrier to going to these places due to the seriousness of needing a toilet. Implementing a good network of public toilets can

significantly contribute to having a more accessible community for these people (Kitchin & Law, 2001).

Accessibility goes beyond ensuring people can access a space; it must meet the needs of those using it. For example, having play structures for children in a park is a step towards an accessible area for children. Without a toilet for them to use, however, some parents might avoid taking their children to the park altogether because their child might need to use the bathroom or have an accident.

Addresses Public Health:

Especially in the Covid-19 pandemic, GottaGo! heard directly from essential workers who describe having no toilet to use. Some of these fields of work include plumbers, and electricians, truck drivers. For these workers having no bathroom causes them to participate in risky behaviours such as holding in urine for long periods or taking hormones to reduce menstruation because they have no place to go (Lowe, 2018). Other workers subject themselves to dehumanizing methods such as urinating in bottles (Ramster, Greed, & Bichard, 2018).

Those who menstruate also need access to a toilet as these biological functions often occur suddenly and unexpectedly; menstruating people cannot hold off on this function and need a toilet to change sanitary products. Menstruating people risk infections and dangerous conditions such as Toxic Shock Syndrome when they do not have a space to change these products (Ramster, Greed, & Bichard, 2018). When a person starts menstruating in public, there is no way to stop it, and they need ready access to a toilet to use sanitary products; it provides dignity, so they do not bleed through their clothing (Anthony & Dufresne, 2007).

The examples listed above are only a few of the many people whose health and wellbeing improve with access to a public toilet. People of all ages and abilities need a safe public toilet. When people hold in urine for long periods, they risk causing urinary infections or disorders (Reddy, Raghavan, & Vedala, 2019). The physical risks when not able to use a toilet affect every human, and these risks are alleviated when public toilets are present in a community.

Benefits the Economy for Cities and Local Businesses:

Having accessible and attractive public toilets enhances a downtown area by bringing shoppers to the area. Although people use small businesses, such as coffee shops, as public toilets, this method does not ensure consistent access to a public toilet. For one, there is an assumption/expectation that users purchase a product at the store to use the toilet, thus reducing its accessibility. There is also no guarantee that shops will have a customer toilet, and some people cannot wait to search for one. Having access to a toilet can be so critical that some people describe choosing to shop at large retail malls because of the guarantee that there are toilets available in these locations (Lowe, 2018). Communities that encourage shopping locally should consider adding public toilets to these spaces to increase patronage. Public toilets benefit everyone, including local businesses.

This report has documented a range of possibilities and reasons for Ottawa, and other municipalities, to establish a network of safe, clean, and accessible public toilets. Ottawa brands itself as a first-class, livable city, but there is one crucial piece missing. With COVID, it has become clear that public toilets are essential public health infrastructure. Public toilets cannot be an afterthought; communities must intentionally plan their public toilets to create a safe, inclusive, and livable city.

References:

- Anthony, K. H., & Dufresne, M. (2007). Potty parity in perspective: Gender and family issues in planning and designing public restrooms. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 21(3), 267-294. doi:10.1177/0885412206295846
- Associated Press. (2019, August 02). The insanely high cost of Keeping San Francisco streets poop-free. Retrieved from <https://nypost.com/2019/08/02/san-francisco-curbs-waste-with-200000-public-toilets/>
- Bernhardt, D. (2019, August 26). Pop-up toilet returns to Winnipeg streets, offers dignity and Safety. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/pop-up-toilet-winnipeg-homeless-1.5259779#:~:text=Facility%20will%20be%20open%20to,7%20a.m.%20to%204%20p.m&text=9-,Winnipeg%27s%20popular%20pop%20Dup%20potty%2C%20which%20debuted%20in%202018%20and,officially%20reopened%20to%20the%20public>
- Bhatty, A. (2011, December 06). Vancouver man trapped in Automatic toilet. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-man-trapped-in-automatic-toilet-1.1072055>
- Bruemmer, R. (2019, June 15). Montreal's public toilets: Mixed reviews FOR \$527,000 loos. Retrieved from <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/montreals-public-toilets-mixed-reviews-for-527000-loos>
- City of Edmonton. (2020). Public Washroom Pilot Project Evaluation: Final Report. Retrieved from <https://pub-edmonton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=74459>
- City of Nelson Public Works and Utilities. (2017). Top 10 questions about the Portland Loo in downtown Nelson. Retrieved from

<https://www.nelson.ca/Archive/ViewFile/Item/144#:~:text=The%20Portland%20Loo%20comes%20with,if%20this%20is%20deemed%20necessary.>

Day, J. (2021, January 20). Penticton interested in new public washroom concept to combat vandalism. Retrieved from <https://www.kelownacapnews.com/news/penticton-interested-in-new-public-washroom-concept-to-combat-vandalism/>

De Beck, K., Small, W., Wood, E., Li, K., Montaner, J., & Kerr, T. (2009). Public injecting among a cohort of injecting drug users in Vancouver, Canada. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 63*(1), 81-86. doi:10.1136/jech.2007.069013

Deschamps, R. (2018, May 15). WATCH: Montreal gets its first self-cleaning public toilet. Retrieved from <https://www.iheartradio.ca/cjad/news/watch-montreal-gets-its-first-self-cleaning-public-toilet-1.3821332>

Fozouni, L., Buchheit, B., Walley, A. Y., Testa, M., & Chatterjee, A. (2019). Public restrooms and the opioid epidemic. *Substance Abuse, 41*(4), 432-436. doi:10.1080/08897077.2019.1640834

Goodyear, S., Raman-Wilms, M., & Lowe, L. (2020, July 15). Pandemic proves Canada desperately needs more public washrooms. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-thursday-edition-1.5643649/pandemic-proves-canada-desperately-needs-more-public-washrooms-author-1.5645470>

Gordon, R. (2016, June 15). PRESS RELEASE: San Francisco Expands Successful Pit Stop Public Toilet Program -. Retrieved from <https://sfpublicworks.org/project/press-release-san-francisco-expands-successful-pit-stop-public-toilet-program-61516>

Greed, C. (2006). The role of the public toilet: Pathogen transmitter or health facilitator? *Building Services Engineering Research and Technology, 27*(2), 127-139. doi:10.1191/0143624406bt151oa

-
- Har, J. (2019, August 02). San Francisco public toilets help homeless, cost \$200,000. Retrieved from <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2019/08/02/san-francisco-public-toilets-help-homeless-cost-200000/>
- Hartigan, S. M., Bonnet, K., Chisholm, L., Kowalik, C., Dmochowski, R. R., Schlundt, D., & Reynolds, W. S. (2020). Why do women not use the bathroom? Women's attitudes and beliefs on using public restrooms. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(6), 2053. doi:10.3390/ijerph17062053
- Hu, W. (2017, April 05). A public restroom fit for Brooke Astor gets an upgrade. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/nyregion/bryant-park-restroom-renovation.html?_r=1
- Jagger Haines, B. (2018, July 30). Technical glitch makes self-cleaning public toilet near Papineau inaccessible. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/4361726/technical-glitch-makes-self-cleaning-public-toilet-near-papineau-inaccessible/>
- The John Howard Society of Canada. (2019, January 07). Media portrayals of crime create problems. Retrieved from <https://johnhoward.ca/blog/media-portrayals-crime-create-problems/>
- Kitchin, R., & Law, R. (2001). The socio-spatial construction of (in)accessible public toilets. *Urban Studies*, 38(2), 287-298. doi:10.1080/00420980124395
- Little, O. (2020, June 22). The pandemic is highlighting the lack of city-funded public washrooms in Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.freshdaily.ca/news/2020/06/public-washrooms-canada/>
- Lorber, J. (2012). Why do bathrooms matter? *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews*, 41(5), 598-602. doi:10.1177/0094306112457657c

Lowe, L. (2018). *No Place To Go: How Public Toilets Fail Our Private Needs*. Toronto, ON: Coach House Books.

Pindera, E. (2019, August 27). Winnipeg's pop-up toilets back on Main Street with harm reduction focus. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/5817186/winnipeg-pop-up-toilets-harm-reduction/>

The Portland Loo. (2017). The Portland Loo: World Class Solution to Your City's Public Restroom Needs. Retrieved from <https://pffcfdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Portland-Loo-Presentation-DC-march-2017-1.pdf>

The Portland Loo. (n/a). Why Loo. Retrieved from <https://portlandloo.com/why-loo/>

Ramster, G., Greed, C., & Bichard, J. (2018). How inclusion can exclude: The case of public toilet provision for women. *Built Environment*, 44(1), 52-76. doi:10.2148/benv.44.1.52

Ramster, G., Greed, C., & Bichard, J. (2018). How inclusion can exclude: The case of public toilet provision for women. *Built Environment*, 44(1), 52-76. doi:10.2148/benv.44.1.52

Reddy, Y. M., Raghavan, S., & Vedala, S. C. (2019). A narrative exposition on public toilet usage by women: A study from warangal. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 26(1-2), 108-137. doi:10.1177/0971521518808100

Scalza, R. (2011, September 23). A flushing Revolution: Inside the automated toilets of Vancouver. Retrieved from <https://www.insidevancouver.ca/2011/09/23/a-flushing-revolution-inside-of-vancouvers-automated-toilets/>

Schulman, A. (2017). This is the nicest public bathroom in New York City. Retrieved from <https://www.thrillist.com/lifestyle/new-york/bryant-park-public-bathroom>

Scott, M. (2018, May 15). Keeping it clean: How Montreal's New self-cleaning toilets work. Retrieved from <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/keeping-it-clean-how-those-self-cleaning-toilets-wor>

St. Clair Bridgman, R., & Bridgman, W. (2018). Public toilets, accessibility, and human rights: A Winnipeg pop-up campaign. Retrieved from <https://viurrspace.ca/bitstream/handle/10613/23192/Bridgman.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>