

GOTTA GO!

Advocacy Strategy 2017

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Introduction

This document is a detailed advocacy strategy for the Gotta Go! Campaign. Since 2013, Gotta Go! has been advocating for a network of public toilets to be built across the city of Ottawa (Gotta Go, “Our Team”). Free, accessible, and public toilets will enable individuals of all demographic backgrounds and ability to participate in city life. A network of public toilets will also contribute to more equitable and inclusive city planning. As a part of their 2017 advocacy strategy, Gotta Go! has decided to re-focus their efforts on maximizing the existing public toilet infrastructure in Ottawa. The City of Ottawa currently operates 419 public toilets (Roberts, Welter & Ahmed, 2016). A research study commissioned by Gotta Go! found that many of these toilets do not have public facing signage, rendering them invisible to citizens and visitors who may urgently need them (Roberts et al., 2016). Based on these findings, the 2017 advocacy strategy put forward in this document is a plan to install signage on existing city-owned public toilets across the City of Ottawa.

Historical Background

The Gotta Go! campaign was created in 2013, after a group of concerned citizens attended a Citizen’s Academy “Civics Boot Camp,” where they focused on an issue impacting their community. After the bootcamp, the group continued their advocacy efforts by officially launching the Gotta Go! campaign on World Toilet Day in November 2013 (Roberts et al., 2016). The Gotta Go! team is a diverse working group — made up of individuals from the voluntary sector, academia, and people with varying identities, backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses (Robert et al., 2016). The group has partnered with several community organizations, including representatives from Crohn’s and Colitis Canada, a charity focused on finding a cure for those living with gastrointestinal and digestive irregularities (Crohn’s and Colitis Canada, 2016). These partnerships have resulted in visibility campaigns, public lectures and events, and the installation of a “pop-up” porta-potty in an Ottawa park.

Gotta Go! is an unincorporated association, and does not currently receive funding. To date, this has very little impact on their ability to do their advocacy work. The group’s primary focus is on raising awareness about the need for public toilets; to achieve this goal, Gotta Go! has worked to secure funding directly from municipal government towards the project. The group does accept direct donations, but also may have charitable organizations accept funds on their behalf.

Previous Actions

Since the launch of the Gotta Go! campaign in 2013, the group has led several actions and initiatives in the city. The group first launched on World Toilet Day in 2014, where the team presented their ideas to a panel of decision-makers at the Citizens Academy Bootcamp. In 2015, they led a campaign for Ottawa’s city council to consider building public toilets in two LRT stations, resulting in Ottawa City Council’s unanimous consent. The motion, which was led by Councillor McKenney, requested that council determine how to include public toilets into the design plans of the new LRT stations (Jackson, 2015). Additionally, the group has gained consistent coverage in major and local media outlets, with articles appearing on CBC Ottawa, and in the *Ottawa Citizen* and *Glebe Report*. Gotta Go! has spearheaded several awareness campaigns, a petition and call to actions, to mobilize members of the public to put and maintain pressure on Ottawa City Council. Most notably, in June 2016, Gotta Go! received permission to build a portable toilet at a local splash pad for the summer; the toilet was wheelchair accessible and funded by anonymous donors in the group (Murray, 2016).

In April 2016, Gotta Go! commissioned a research study on the current availability, quality and accessibility of public toilets owned, operated and maintained by the City of Ottawa (Roberts et al., 2016). In a report titled *Flushing Inequality*, Gotta Go! partnered with a research team of graduate students from the school of social work, to collect and compile existing information on public toilets in Ottawa. The research team collected information on 92 toilets across the City of Ottawa. Each public toilet was assessed using a “Visual Public Tool Assessment Tool” that used 47 criteria, divided into three categories: availability, accessibility, and quality of the toilet. The research findings revealed that all public toilets met the quality criteria, and most of the toilets were wheelchair accessible. However, when assessed against the building criteria outlined in the *Ontario Building Code*, a majority of the facilities were found to be deficient (Roberts et al., 2016). The most salient information identified in the research project was that 85% of the toilets sampled did not have signage. Only 14 of the 92 toilets researched had a sign indicating there was a public toilet nearby. The research study concluded that access to public toilets in Ottawa are restricted and poorly advertised, and thus deemed existing public toilets in the Ottawa unable to adequately serve residents of the city.

Existing Need

The Gotta Go! campaign was founded under the premise that everyone, regardless if they are living in, visiting, or passing through Ottawa, should have access to a public toilet. By building public toilets in parks, transit stops and tourist areas across the city, the municipality is taking an active role in creating a more inclusive, liveable and functioning city. The need for increased availability of public washrooms is driven in part by the changing demographics and culture of the city. The City of Ottawa is rapidly expanding, increasing the demand on available public toilets. Between 2011 and 2016, the population increased by 50,852 (Census Profile, 2016). As the nation’s capital and top tourist attraction for individuals across the country, Ottawa receives approximately 8 million visitors a year (CTV News, 2012). Each year, individuals across the country and around the world are drawn to attractions including Parliament Hill, the Rideau Canal and Gatineau Park.

Expanding Public Transit

In addition to demographic changes, the culture and landscape of Ottawa is also changing. In partnership with municipal, provincial, and federal governments, Ottawa is expanding its transit system to include two new Light Rail Transit (LRT) lines. By 2023, Ottawa will have twenty-two new LRT stations (City of Ottawa, 2017a). The LRT expansion will allow many individuals to travel across the city, including through the downtown core, and is expected to reduce traffic congestion and improve commute times. As ridership increases following the expansion, however, the need for public toilet infrastructure will become critical. Including public toilets in transit stations would ensure that commuters have safe, free access to bathrooms, both in case of sudden emergency or regular need because of a disability like Crohn’s and Colitis. Public bathrooms in transit stations also alleviates potential burdens on local businesses, who frequently deny use of their bathrooms to the general public; Gotta Go!’s study, *Talking Toilets*, found that 64% of participants had been refused access to a private toilet in the past (Canham, 2014).

Equity and Accessibility

Creating a network of public toilets across the City of Ottawa will also enable many individuals, including those living with health and mobility issues, to participate in civic life. As the Canadian population ages, the number of citizens living with disabilities is expected to rise, a process that has already begun (Statistics Canada, 2006). Canadians with disabilities, along with pregnant women, young children and seniors often have to use the washroom at a moment's notice. Crohn's and Colitis Canada notes that individuals living with the disease often experience fear and anxiety when leaving their homes, not knowing whether or not there will be bathrooms available should they need them (2016). Gotta Go! has documented instances of businesses unwilling to open their bathrooms to the public (J. Kuyek, personal communication, April 4, 2017), and has further noted that, for those with urgent needs, waiting to make a purchase or obtain a key may not always be possible.

The local homeless population is also disproportionately impacted by the availability of public bathrooms. Without shelter or community spaces available, homeless individuals must rely on public and business-owned bathrooms throughout the day. Homeless populations, as well as individuals appearing to be homeless, are often prevented from accessing public washrooms due to their appearance or perceived hygiene. A lack of public bathrooms may force homeless and vulnerable populations to urinate in public, risking fines and profiling by law enforcement officers. Ensuring that all of Ottawa's residents have access to public toilets, in spaces where people gather together, eat, and play will help decrease feelings of isolation, and will make Ottawa a more inclusive city.

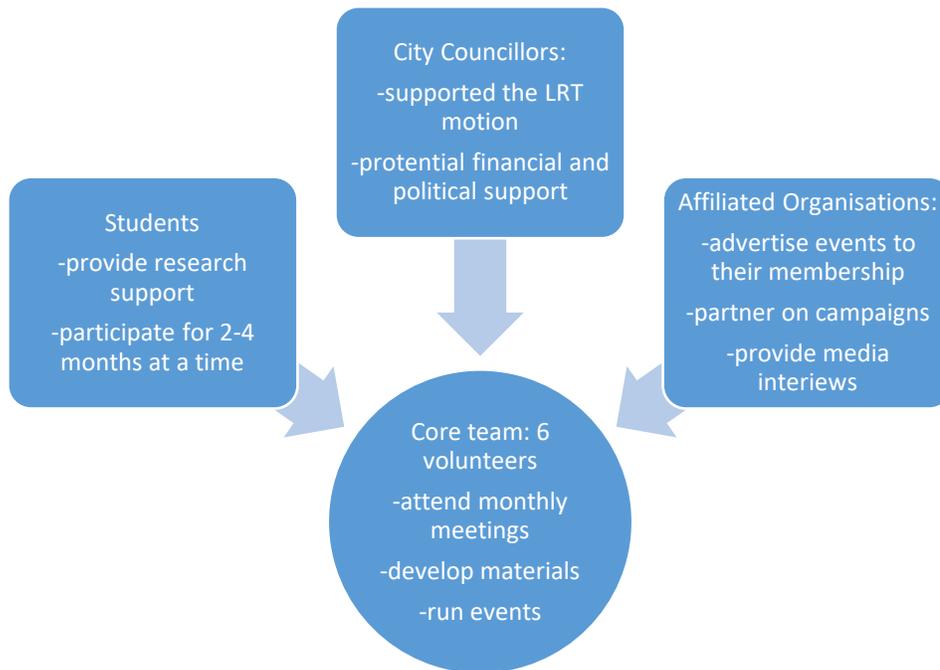
In order to address Ottawa's growing needs, the Gotta Go! campaign has continuously worked to advocate for more inclusive city planning. Gotta Go! has focused most of its work on advocating for additional public toilets to be built, as well as raising the public's awareness about the barriers many residents face when accessing public washrooms in Ottawa. Following Gotta Go!'s previous successes, and remaining cognisant of the organisation's limitations, this advocacy strategy proposes the group work to strengthen the existing network of public toilets already available in Ottawa.

Current Organisation

Gotta Go! is a grassroots campaign that currently works at the municipal level in Ottawa to expand the network of public toilets in the city. With extremely limited resources, no assets, and no staff, Gotta Go! relies on a core team of six volunteers (as well as occasional support from students at local universities) to run its campaigns (J. Kuyek, personal communication, April 4, 2017). Under the general direction of Joan Kuyek, the group meets monthly, and expects its volunteers to contribute anywhere between five and fifteen hours of unpaid work between meetings. Gotta Go!'s volunteers have all been a part of the organisation since its founding in 2013, and bring with them a breadth of skills, including website design, advocacy organising, graphic design, and social media. As a part of their work with Gotta Go!, these volunteers have also developed experience lobbying city councillors and city bureaucrats, creating successful partnerships.

As previously mentioned, Gotta Go! has worked on an ad hoc basis with external organisations like Crohn's and Colitis Canada on specific, one-time events. Though the organisation retains contacts and relationships with groups like Crohn's and Colitis, the Somerset Community Health Centre, and Carleton University, it has no formal agreements with any other organisations in place. Previous

partnerships and events have resulted in significant media attention and positive responses from city council, indicating that public and political support for the group's goals does exist.



The campaign operates without consistent or significant funding, regularly asking for anonymous donations from its own volunteers to fund its campaigns. Though Gotta Go! is legally able to accept donations, it has not to date requested donations from the public, and does not have any method to accept donations currently established.

Gotta Go!'s assets also include its social media accounts and website. The group has an established presence on twitter and Facebook, as well as website that is frequently updated and includes a clear call to action for the public (Gotta Go, "Get Involved?"). Without dedicated staff or funding, social media remains an easy and effective way for Gotta Go! to maintain a public presence between campaigns, and provides it with a platform from which to launch new campaigns. The group is also in the process of designing, translating, and printing pamphlets that will be distributed to the public at upcoming events.

The Gotta Go! campaign focuses its advocacy efforts on getting toilets built in public and outdoor spaces across Ottawa. These spaces include: public parks, transit stops and tourist areas. Gotta Go!'s advocacy work fall under municipal jurisdiction, and is primarily focused on achieving funding from Ottawa City Council, to build new public toilets. Given the organisation's size, Gotta Go! has chosen to focus on working with the local municipal government, rather than provincial or federal governments, or the National Capital Commission. These groups may be easier to approach with the support of the City of Ottawa in future campaigns.

Objectives

Gotta Go!'s main objective is to create a network of public, free, and accessible toilets throughout the City of Ottawa. Below, we have outlined long, medium, and short term goals that will enable

Gotta Go! to work towards its goal in a realistic manner. Our proposed objectives focus on achieving policy changes by working with available partners, rather than growing Gotta Go! as its own organisation. Though more volunteers and funding may enable Gotta Go! to take on more challenging campaigns, its previous successes in securing funding for public bathrooms in LRT stations indicates that it is capable of achieving change with its current resources.

In 2016 John Ivison wrote that infrastructure is not the sexiest of topics; with bathroom infrastructure presumably even less so, attracting volunteers and donors is likely to prove a challenge. Partnering with existing organisations as necessary will provide Gotta Go! with the support it needs, without requiring additional investments of time or money.

Long Term:

- The City of Ottawa provides ongoing funding for permanent public bathroom locations across Ottawa
 - These may include parks, municipal buildings, and LRT or other transit stations
 - Through municipal funding, these bathrooms will be kept free for users

Medium Term (this year):

- The City of Ottawa allocates funding for permanent signage outside of public, municipally owned bathrooms
 - Funding will be included in the 2017 budget, set to be released in December of this year
 - The city planning committee will also pass a motion adopting a formal signage policy, directing city staff to develop signs and identify bathrooms in need

Short Term (next six months):

- Gotta Go! will run a successful awareness-raising campaign, centered around a one day signage event at Ottawa City Hall
 - As a part of this campaign, Gotta Go! will implement the plan outlined below, including a public demonstration, media coverage, and meetings with city councillors and bureaucrats
 - Gotta Go! will install public bathroom signs outside of Ottawa City Hall, and will hand out pamphlets to the public, as well as passing city councillors and staff

Target Audience

As can be seen in the objectives identified above, city councillors are crucial in the success of Gotta Go!'s campaign. City councillors' support will be required to introduce and pass motions at city council and on the city's planning committee. To receive attention and support from councillors, we recommend that Gotta Go! also target municipal and political staff, as well as local Ottawa media outlets and councillors' social media networks.

Gotta Go! should also continue to partner with like-minded local organisations, including Crohn's and Colitis, the Somerset Community Health Centre, and Carleton University's Social Work program. These groups may provide research support, as they have done in the past, and may mobilize their members to attend events hosted by Gotta Go!, raising the organisation's profile and aiding them in gaining media coverage.

In later phases of the campaign, Gotta Go! may also wish to partner with members of the business and tourism communities, who are likely to support publicly funded bathrooms to reduce strain on their own institutions and to make Ottawa more attractive to customers and tourists. To date, Gotta Go! has not been able to successfully contact representatives from either group, including the National Capital Commission. The group can re-focus on expanding their lobbying efforts if necessary as they move into their “long term” goals, where they will need to expand the size and scope of their campaign.

Theory of Change

A theory of change illustrates an organisation’s best guess as to how they will reach their end-goals. All of an organisation’s strategies and objectives should fit within this theory of change. For the advocacy strategy we are proposing for the Gotta Go! campaign, the theory of change is specific to getting signage at pre-existing public washrooms in the City of Ottawa. To attain this goal, city council must be able to feasibly implement this request (Mulholland, 2011).

The theory of change for Gotta Go!’s public signage campaign involves five steps: consciousness-raising, face-time with decision-makers, presenting the argument, following up, and gathering momentum. The logic that dictates this theory of change is largely applicable to Gotta Go!’s central campaign of getting more accessible public washrooms in Ottawa.

Consciousness-raising

The first step towards change is getting attention and public support for the issue.

Face-time with decision-makers

After the issue has credibility and is seen as impacting the public, setting up time to meet with decision-makers will be easier; they will wish to solve the issue to please their constituents and be re-elected.

Present argument and evidence

We recommend that Gotta Go! make short-term pragmatic requests (National Alliance, 2011) to aim for one specific policy win, and then gather momentum.

Follow-up

Once the motion to install signage is presented, city councillors must be held accountable, both to vote for the motion, and, should it pass, to ensure that the policy is implemented.

Momentum for main campaign

The signage campaign seeks a concrete end-result (signage) while also acting as a tool to increase awareness and support for the issue of a lack of publicly accessible washrooms in Ottawa.

Plan Description

To ensure that the advocacy plan follows the logic of our proposed theory of change, we have couched all elements of the advocacy plan within the theory of change.

Gotta Go!’s current message, taken from their website, is:

“A network of safe, free, clean, environmentally responsible public toilets that are accessible to persons with disabilities in Ottawa will benefit all of us in the city particularly, [sic] women, children, seniors and people with chronic [sic] diseases. It will help us keep our city clean and more friendly for residents and visitors. It will also create jobs, increase safety in our public spaces, and stimulate [sic] the economy. It is a win-win to [sic] everyone at all ages!” (Gotta Go, Get Involved?)

For the purposes of this signage event, including printed materials, emails to city councillors, and media interviews, we propose shortening the organisation’s message to focus on the need for improved visibility. The proposed message, included below, is also short enough to be tweeted (in two parts), or to be adapted as a media headline. Longer form written materials could expand to include facts about Ottawa’s demographics and the expanding need for public, accessible bathrooms, as outlined above.

“A network of safe, clean, and accessible public toilets would benefit everyone in Ottawa, from children to seniors. The City of Ottawa can start by making existing bathrooms visible – because time is short when you gotta go.”

Consciousness-raising

In addition to getting signage installed in all public City of Ottawa washrooms, a concomitant goal of this campaign is to raise awareness about the lack of public washrooms in Ottawa. Because of these dual intentions, consciousness-raising is crucial.

In order to raise awareness about the need for public signage, we recommend that Gotta Go! run a “guerilla signage” event outside of City Hall. City Hall has public washrooms, but does not have visible signage outside of the building indicating these facilities. City Hall is an ideal location for this event because city councillors and their staff are likely to pass by the event. Ensuring that city councillors and staff are aware of the issue, even on a surface level, will make them more likely to follow subsequent media coverage, and to be receptive to requests for meetings, or direct asks for support from the organisation. Wood has found that familiarity with an event (even where it takes place) makes it easier for decision-makers to connect with it because fewer psychological barriers for processing new information are present (2000). City Hall is also a symbolic and visually arresting location, providing a backdrop for (social) media coverage that will demonstrate the issue’s municipal focus.

The event should be staged in a way to generate visual images that will translate well to subsequent advocacy efforts (Silver, 2003). At the event, we recommend that Gotta Go! volunteers make a large sign that contains all the information they would want on permanent public washroom signs. Elements to include could be hours of operation, availability of gender neutral bathrooms, and how far washrooms are located from the sign location (Kuyek, personal correspondence, 2017). Another volunteer could take photos and use social media during the event (i.e., live tweet). Gotta Go! should make significant efforts to bring as many people as possible to this event. In addition to volunteers, the organisation could reach out to allied organisations (like Crohn’s and Colitis, or the Somerset Community Health Centre) to spread their message and expand the network of potential attendees.

Strategic partnerships with allied organisations are important because they add more voices to the issue (National Alliance 2011). The more people who attend, the clearer the message to city councillors and staff that this issue is a potential vote-winner, as well as intelligent city design.

Leading up to the event, we recommend that Gotta Go! distribute press releases to local media agencies. These press releases should tell a story instead of reciting facts, though facts, quotes, and statistics should be used to support the story (Silver, 2003). Some things to include in a press release are contact information for the group (including social media), the main point of contact (who will need to be established head of time), photos, an event description, some statistics as to why public washroom signage is an important issue, and the logistical details of the event (Silver, 2003).

Media presence at the event serves two purposes: it makes the event seem more legitimate and it means that there will be more public awareness of the event. We recommend that Gotta Go! launch a social media campaign leading up to the event as well, using their existing accounts (twitter, Facebook) to distribute their research on the issue and promote the event itself. After, Gotta Go! should continue this approach, using photos and quotations gathered from the event for social media posts. Gotta Go!'s social media followers were acquired during previous campaigns, and are likely Ottawa residents, city councillors, and affiliated organisations. This network will allow Gotta Go! to reach their target audience without the need for paid ads or extensive recruitment and promotion.

We also recommend that Gotta Go! hold this event during the summer, to coincide with increased tourism levels (and thus usage of public bathrooms) around Canada 150 events. As the city and country prepare for the extensive celebrations, Ottawa has taken great efforts to polish its image, including renovating landmarks like the National Arts Centre and historic buildings downtown. A lack of public toilets, or the sudden appearance of a large number of porta-potties in iconic locations would be highly noticeable throughout the tourist season. Gotta Go!'s signage event would ideally highlight the lack of public toilets, and signs for them, at a time when political figures at all levels are concerned with the city's image.

Face-time with Decision-Makers

In order to get face-time with decision-makers, Gotta Go! should prepare a short report (one or two pages) with their request and arguments for public signage. Gotta Go! should also invite decision makers, including city councillors, to their event, and tag them on social media where appropriate. Shortly after the event, Gotta Go! should contact decision-makers' staff, particularly those who interacted with Gotta Go! at the event to set up an in-person meeting.

In order for public washroom signage to be installed, city council or the planning committee must pass a motion (City of Ottawa, 2017b). This motion would likely request that city staff develop a report or formal plan on public signage, including costing, to be included in the budget presented in December 2017. Ideally, this motion would be brought to the planning committee, where Gotta Go! could provide a deputation, as they have successfully done in the past. When choosing which decision-makers to approach and how, three criteria to consider are their level of support, level of influence, and the confidence the organisation has in these estimations (Stachowiak, Afflerback & Howetter, 2016). In this instance, these criteria may include whether or not city councillors are on the Planning Committee, as well as whether they have supported Gotta Go! in the past.

There are two city councillors who would be best to focus on: Jeff Leiper and Catherine McKenney. Jeff Lieper is a member of the Planning Committee, which we believe is the best committee to approach about signage; Gotta Go! has also had favourable contact with him in the past. As a member of the Planning Committee, Leiper can place the issue of public washroom signage on the committee's agenda for the Gotta Go! campaign to depute. Although not a member of the Planning Committee, McKenney has been an advocate for this issue (and other social justice issues) in the past, publishing Gotta Go!'s materials on her website and speaking to the media about Gotta Go! campaigns. McKenney's ward also includes the downtown core, an area with several existing public washrooms as well as tourist traffic. Furthermore, this area is home to many people who are precariously housed or homeless, as well as number of shelters (including the Ottawa Mission) – these populations are most likely to need public bathrooms and would benefit from bathroom signage. If additional support is needed, Gotta Go! can approach other members of the Planning Committee. Although meeting with a city councillor has the end-goal of being invited to make a deposition, it can simultaneously be used to build support for the issue.

Present Evidence and Argument

Both when initially meeting with individual city councillors and when deputing at committee, Gotta Go! must present a convincing argument. All communications with Council (and the public) should have this goal in mind. Details gathered during the “guerilla signage” event can be used to support these arguments. For example, when contacting city councillors to set up a meeting or make other formal requests, Gotta Go! can reference this event and include photos and quotations, particularly from the public, to support their argument. Some of the key items to highlight in communications include:

- there is a problem to be addressed; Ottawa's population is growing, tourism levels are projected to rise for Canada 150, but Ottawa has not made plans to provide additional public bathrooms
- council can easily take action to address this problem; additional signage does not require significant study or investment
- signs are expected to cost approximately \$500 each (CostHelper, 2017)
- a lack of signage has a disproportionate impact on children, seniors, persons living with disabilities, and the homeless population
- the experiences of citizens and tourists will be ameliorated by signage, which would lead to increased economic activity and participation in civic life

The goal of deputing is to convince members of the Planning Committee to pass the initial motion, and ideally to support its inclusion in the 2017 budget.

Follow-up

After deputing to the Planning Committee, Gotta Go! should continue to apply pressure to city councillors to ensure that they support the initial motion at committee, and its inclusion in the 2017 budget. Once a city councillor adds the motion to the Planning Committee's agenda, Gotta Go! should encourage members of the public and allied organisations to contact their city councillors about the issue (Gotta Go! can use its social media networks to do this; because they do not have a volunteer database, regional targeting based on city ward is not possible). If the motion is passed,

Gotta Go! should remain in contact with councillors and city staff to ensure that funding is approved in the budget, and that signs are installed.

Momentum for the main campaign

Throughout this signage campaign, Gotta Go! will increase their visibility and reach, building partnerships with city councillors, like-minded organisations, and city staff. This will make it easier for Gotta Go! to engage with allied organisations and continue to advocate for more public washrooms in Ottawa. Photos and media coverage of the new signage can be used for future outreach about the campaign's central goals and past victories. Gotta Go! can also use festivals and events like Canada 150 to highlight the lack of accessible public washrooms, both in this campaign and in others going forwards.

Evaluation Methods

The methods we chose to evaluate the signage campaign's success are couched in our theory of change. Many advocates evaluate their successes based on concrete outcomes, while others consider successes based on attitudinal change (Whitmore, Calhoun & Wilson, 2011). We recommend that Gotta Go! focuses on policy change while keeping benchmarks of atmospheric changes surrounding the issue, which can partially be inferred by levels of public engagement.

Consciousness-raising

We recommend that Gotta Go! captures the level of public awareness they have generated by tracking statistics on social media platforms, using increases in engagement as benchmarks for success. For example, if leading up to the signage event Gotta Go! averages a 2% monthly increase in engagement, a success after the event could be a 5% increase in engagement. Ways to track public engagement include:

- increase in followers, likes, post shares (include re-tweets) and website views
- increase in downloads of existing third-party apps that track where public washrooms are located
- turnout at the “guerilla signage” event
- media coverage (i.e., through the number of articles written about the campaign)

Since success must be determined in relation to a baseline, the exact number of increases in the above metrics that would constitute success can only be determined once more data are collected on the organisation's current reach.

Face-time with decision-makers

Some metrics that can be used to gauge the success of getting face-time with decision-makers include emails answered by decision-makers and their staff, meetings that occur with decision-makers and decision-makers commit to advocating for the issue.

Present Argument and Evidence

Gotta Go!'s argument and evidence can be evaluated in terms of if the signage campaign reaches decision-making channels. The order in which these channels could be reached are:

- get on the Planning Committee agenda

- get on the Council agenda
- get a motion passed by Council to fund and install signage

The success of Gotta Go’s argument can be judged by if the actions they request occur.

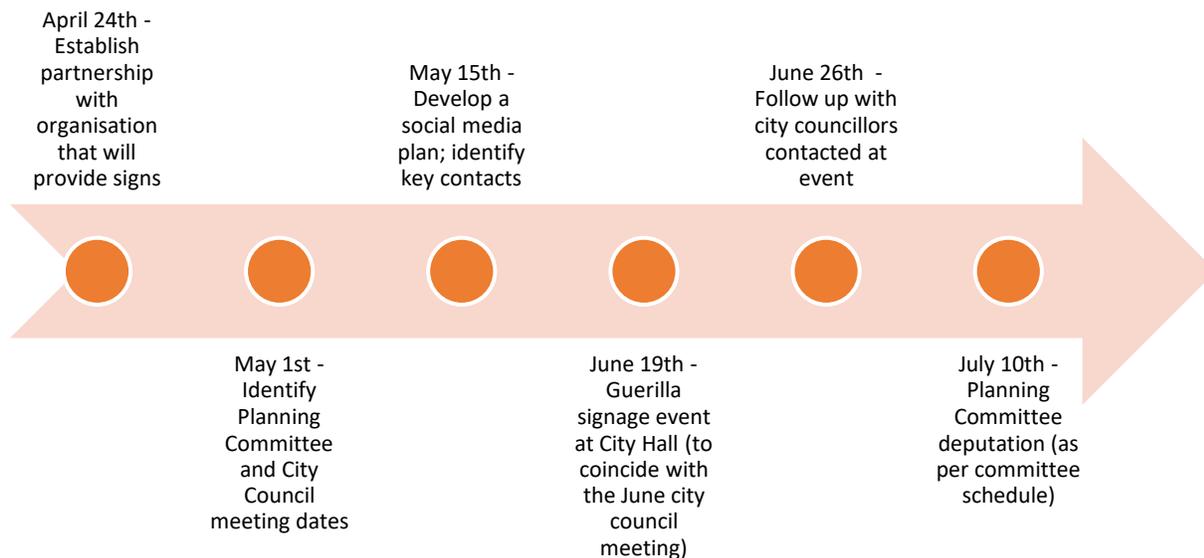
Follow-up

To evaluate the success of Gotta Go’s follow-up with decision-makers, Gotta Go! can use levels of engagement with city councillors and their staff (i.e., answered emails) and if there is a timeline in place to install the signs. Once a commitment has been made, the follow-up can be said to be successful if Gotta Go! can confirm that permanent signs have been installed.

Momentum for Main Campaign

To evaluate the momentum gained for the main campaign, the same tools used to track consciousness-raising can be applied. In this case, levels of engagement at the beginning of the “guerilla signage” campaign could be compared to engagement once signage gets installed. Tracking the engagement as well as the increase in engagement should indicate how much momentum Gotta Go! has achieved for their main campaign.

Timeline



This proposed timeline puts forward a rough outline of the steps Gotta Go! will need to follow ahead of their signage event. While Gotta Go! currently meets once per month, this exercise assumes that they can ramp up their activities ahead of this event. Dates included are indicative of the week in which each action should be completed; some dates, like the planning committee deputation, are dependent on city council’s schedule, which is typically released online several months ahead of time.

The overall timeline is designed to build up to the Canada Day weekend, when tourist season will peak and issues with publicly available bathrooms, if existing, will become apparent. Ideally, the guerilla signage event would take place after this holiday, to avoid competing for media coverage with Canada Day events.

Challenges & Pushback

Gotta Go! faces a number of potential barriers in executing this campaign. Below, we have outlined likely scenarios, and proposed solutions for Gotta Go!.

Lack of public will: As has happened at previous events, the public may not turn out to Gotta Go!'s signage event, weakening its appeal to city councillors. In order to prevent this, Gotta Go! should ensure that it works with community partners to advertise and promote the event. The current plan also focuses on attracting the attention of city councillors and staff; while public support is useful, it may not need to be demonstrated in order to move forwards with council.

Unresponsive city councillors: As with a lack of public will, Gotta Go! may also ask friendly organisations to reach out to city councillors, to put pressure on them to attend meetings or support the motion for public washroom signage. There are also a number of city councillors on the Planning Committee; should one prove to be unresponsive, Gotta Go! could approach other councillors until they find one sympathetic to their cause.

No/failed motion at committee: If there is not a motion brought to committee, or if the motion fails, Gotta Go! should continue to work with city councillors to promote their agenda. The City of Ottawa typically holds budget consultations in October, ahead of the December budget release; these consultations will provide Gotta Go! with a second opportunity to make their case. These consultations may, however, be harder to be effective in without city councillor support and a staff report, and should only be used as a back-up option.

Key volunteer drops out: Gotta Go!'s small volunteer base has been effective in the past, and enables it to move quickly on campaigns. It is also a significant risk, however; if a key volunteer is unavailable, on vacation, or leaves the organisation, completing the campaign could be difficult. Given Gotta Go!'s existing resources, it is unlikely that they could replace a volunteer dropping out, and would have to rely on other members to expand their efforts. Gotta Go! should continue to partner with university programs and recruit students to expand its membership.

Opposition from the business community or tourism industry: We do not anticipate that any businesses or tourist organisations would be opposed to installing signs for public bathrooms. Nevertheless, Gotta Go! should be prepared to explain how their proposal will benefit both of these groups. Promoting public bathrooms will reduce the strain on local businesses, who are often used for their washrooms by residents and tourists who do not purchase any of their products, or who leave a significant mess behind. Though some may associate public bathrooms with a lack of hygiene, or unsafe areas, we believe that public bathrooms will provide all residents, including the homeless population, with a safe and clean bathroom space, reducing the need for public urination and other nuisances.

Conclusion

Through the introduction of signs for public bathrooms, Gotta Go! can help the City of Ottawa take a first step towards building a network of safe, free, and accessible public bathrooms. Following a successful campaign, Gotta Go! will be better poised to push for the creation of new public bathrooms, whether they be in LRT stations, municipal buildings, or in free-standing structures in parks and other public spaces. Public bathrooms are not only a public health and accessibility concern, but will also make Ottawa more attractive to families with children, seniors, and tourists, improving city life for everyone in Canada's capital.

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