

# City to set up portable toilets downtown

By: Joyanne Pursaga

Posted: 12/2/2020 6:01 PM



A pop-up toilet was set up in various downtown locations in 2018. (Andrew Ryan / Winnipeg Free Press files)

Winnipeggers will soon have more "places to go" in and beyond downtown, since seven portable washrooms are slated to be set up this month.

Some of the washrooms could be erected as early as next week, said Coun. Sherri Rollins, chairperson of council's protection, community services and parks committee.

The list includes three portable washrooms to be set up around the area of Henry, Main and Martha streets, one at Air Canada Park and one on Furby Street. Individual portable washrooms will also be set up at the intersections of Selkirk Avenue and Powers Street, and River Avenue and Osborne Street, she said.

The \$50,000 investment in the portable washrooms will serve an important public health need in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rollins said, noting the sites were chosen to be accessible to homeless Winnipeggers.

"(There's always) an absolute need for public washrooms and literally a place to go, but during the pandemic, where there (have been) no washrooms (due to business and facility closures)... everyone (was) being told handwashing is so vital to keeping up public health and... really fight off the virus," she said. "We know that people who were living unsheltered in downtown didn't have that opportunity."

Funding for the washrooms comes from a \$670,000 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations grant provided by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which, in turn, received a donation from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation.

The remaining \$620,000 is earmarked for a permanent public washroom, which the city expects to add in the spring, likely near the Circle of Life Thunderbird House on Main Street, said Rollins.

While a city report earlier this year noted public restrooms in Memorial Park were closed in 2004 following complaints of vandalism and safety risks, that shouldn't prevent the city from providing a space for Winnipeggers to relieve themselves now, Rollins said.

"You have security issues in parks. Do you eliminate all parks? No. So it's the same thing for washrooms," she said.

Supporters of the project include the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, which expects the accessible toilets to prevent public urination and defecation, improving the cleanliness of the city's downtown.

Mayor Brian Bowman supports the idea.

"It just comes down to dignity and trying to make sure that folks have a place to go. We want to accommodate that and we want to make sure that we provide our residents with the dignity that they deserve," said Bowman.

Joyanne.pursaga@freepress.mb.ca

Twitter: @joyanne.pursaga

**Joyanne Pursaga**

*Reporter*

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Joyanne loves to tell the stories of this city, especially when politics is involved. Joyanne became the city hall reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press in early 2020.

 [Read full biography](#)

The Winnipeg Free Press invites you to share your opinion on this story in a letter to the editor. A selection of letters to the editor are **published daily**.

**To submit a letter:**

- fill out the form [on this page](#), or
- email [letters@freepress.mb.ca](mailto:letters@freepress.mb.ca), or
- mail *Letters to the Editor*, 1355 Mountain Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2X 3B6.

Letters must include the writer's full name, address, and a daytime phone number. Letters are edited for length and clarity.