



Supply chain issues hammer city construction projects

Public washroom, sewage upgrades, library repairs all face delays

By: Joyanne Pursaga | Posted: 7:00 PM CST Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022

Supply chain issues are throwing a wrench into city construction projects, stalling the delay of a public washroom for the city's most vulnerable and threatening to wreak havoc on major sewage treatment upgrades.

A long-awaited public washroom at 715 Main St., next to Circle of Life Thunderbird House, was expected to open in December but is now postponed until at least March, as builders wait for key components of the structure to arrive.

Wins Bridgman, the architect who designed the facility, said a delay in receiving three large glass garage doors has held up the structure's opening date.



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The public washroom slated for 715 Main was originally expected to open in December or January but now isn't expected to open until March "because of material delays".

"Those are essential elements to the design of the washroom. We cannot open the building without it... The idea of the washroom is transparency (of its shared spaces) and that the community is able to help protect each other by being able to have a visual connection between the inside of the washroom and people who are outside," said Bridgman.

Bridgman said the glass door supplier is coping with a parts shortage as well.

"I think everybody is really frustrated with supply chain issues in the construction industry, as in other areas, and it hurts everybody," he said.

Since the washroom is intended primarily to offer a safe place to go for



"The vulnerable folks in the community who need public washrooms have more difficulty finding (them in a pandemic) when a lot of institutions, a lot of the restaurants, a lot of the places people would go to find a washroom (are closed or operating with reduced capacity)... We really need those washrooms up and working," he said.

Supply chain woes also forced the city to close the Cornish Library last month after its heating system failed. It's expected to remain shuttered until at least this spring due to an anticipated two- to three-month wait for a replacement.

City spokesperson Kalen Qually noted nearly all city projects will likely be affected by the problem "to varying degrees," including the major upgrades being completed at the South End and North End sewage treatment plants.

"It is expected that supply chain issues, especially for materials that require overseas shipping, will have an impact on delivery times and associated costs for (the sewage upgrades). At this stage, we're still identifying those impacts with our suppliers," Qually said in an emailed statement.

Coun. Sherri Rollins, the chairperson of council's protection and community services committee, said the washroom delay and threat to other projects are a



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The North End Sewage Treatment Plant, otherwise known as the North End Water Pollution Control Center at 2230 Main Street.



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Cornish Library, 20 West Gate, closed after its HVAC system failed, and will probably not reopen till spring because replacement systems are backordered.

"For things like the public washroom that we've so desperately needed, it is hard to be patient...," Rollins said. "Across the board, infrastructure projects are at risk of delay."

Coun. Brian Mayes, the head of council's water and waste committee, fears supply chain disruptions could increase

the price of a \$1.854-billion upgrade to the North End sewage treatment.

"It's (already many) hundreds of millions of dollars, so it's certainly a concern," said Mayes.

Two years into the pandemic, there's little governments can do to plan for these delays, said Barry Prentice, a University of Manitoba supply chain management professor.

"I think it's super unpredictable, it's just hit and miss. It isn't a case of things being bought out completely. It's just delays," said Prentice.

He said there are multiple factors making it difficult to secure parts and products quickly, including pandemic-related staff absences, sudden surges in consumer demand, closed ports and trucker shortages.

For example, the demand for lumber has skyrocketed, elevating its price, as many COVID-restricted homeowners spend money on home renovations



"You just have to have everybody buying a little bit more (of one item) to overwhelm the supply chain that's not geared to that," said Prentice.

Delays could pose some financial challenges for the city and its taxpayers, since extended timelines may increase the costs of projects, he added.

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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.