

# CITY OF VICTORIA

## Committee of the Whole Report

**Date:** July 12, 2007

**From:** Michael Hill, Downtown Coordinator

**Subject:** Public Washrooms

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### Executive Summary

This report is a follow-up to the Committee of the Whole report Council received on October 5, 2007. Council approved recommendations that staff assess the suggestions presented in a Discussion Paper on public washrooms. This included piloting of late night urinals in problematic locations, continuation of the operation of the Centennial Square washrooms and consideration of how the City could best support strategies for improved public washroom access.

A pilot project for the evening urinals, reopening of the Centennial Square washrooms and further analysis of the suggested strategies have been completed. The late night urinals were found to be effective in reducing public urination and were generally acceptable to the public and neighbouring businesses. The Centennial Square washrooms have served demand from the street community and the general public. A survey and a Roundtable session indicated that the urinals and reopening of the washrooms were considered to be positive initiatives.

The key issue for Council's attention is to confirm whether providing urinals and a purpose-built public washroom with the continuation of the operating arrangements at Centennial Square in the interim, are the best means of addressing identified issues and, if so, how should this be achieved. The late night portable urinal program was successful, though permanent installation of urinals represents the best value for the City in providing a facility targeted to this issue. A public washroom facility in the Centennial Square area is considered the most cost-effective way for the City to support downtown public washroom accessibility for all types of users in the short-term.

Other suggestions for improving access to public washrooms were also examined. Improving signage and continuing to periodically undertake anti-public urination campaigns are proposed as initiatives for the City to undertake alone or in partnerships with others. Supporting the provision of washrooms and hygiene facilities by social services was endorsed in public feedback. Assessing other ways for addressing the need in under-served areas were also considered to be worthy of investigation on a case by case basis. Both of these approaches could be pursued on an ongoing basis as opportunities arise.

### Recommendation

That Council:

1. Improve the Centennial Square washrooms at a one-time capital cost of \$20,000 and continue their operation at an additional annual operating cost of \$182,000 (2007 dollars), depending on hours of access; and direct that the development of a new supervised public washroom in Centennial Square be considered in conjunction with any future comprehensive planning and redevelopment of Centennial Square;
2. Continue to support the public urinal program by installing two retractable urinals in the downtown at an estimated capital cost of \$240,000 and an operational cost of \$20,000 annually;
3. Reinstate the portable urinal program until the permanent urinals are installed and in service at an operating cost of \$5,900 a month for up to 8 months (\$47,200);
4. Approve installation of washroom signage and other directional support in the downtown at a one-time capital cost not to exceed \$5,000;
5. Continue to conduct an annual anti-public urination awareness campaign not to exceed \$5,000, seeking to do so in partnerships when possible.

Respectfully submitted

Michael Hill  
Downtown Coordinator

Deborah Day  
Director of Planning

Peter Sparanese  
Director of Engineering

Mike McCliggott  
Director of Finance

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with recommendations to address the need for public washrooms in the downtown. A previous report identified areas of need and some suggestions for addressing issues. This report presents the findings of several pilot projects and the resulting preferred options for improving washroom access.

This problem can be considered in terms of its implications **socially** (lack of adequate services and imposition of the effects on other citizens), **economically** (unfavourable reputation of the downtown for local shoppers and visitors) and **environmentally** (urine and faeces creating unhygienic conditions in public spaces).

## Background

The October 5, 2006 report to Council outlined the need for washrooms to meet health and hygiene needs for an increasing downtown population and demand from the street community, bar-goers and the public in general. Lack of public toilets was identified as a problem receiving much attention throughout the world.

It was stated that public washroom provision is not the responsibility of a single organization and a map was presented showing the mix of public washroom providers in the downtown and the areas that are served. It was recognized that these service providers have been experiencing problems with misuse of their facilities, which has in many cases resulted in more restrictive access to washrooms for the public.

The report indicated that there is a need for the street community to have greater access to public washrooms. They are often denied access to private facilities, resulting in health issues for them and for the general public. Visitors, downtown workers and shoppers constituted another group with needs for improved access. Bar-goers were a final group who were creating a problem with urination in public during the later hours of the evening.

At its meeting, Council approved recommendations to:

1. *Circulate the discussion paper to selected stakeholders in the downtown and gather feedback to inform the development of a collective approach to public washroom provision.*
2. *Prepare a report to Council describing the strategy as well as options for long-term commitments on the part of the City.*
3. *Support the initiation of a trial project for late night urinals in entertainment areas of the downtown.*
4. *Support the continued operation of the Centennial Square washrooms until the presentation of recommendations in the above report as outlined in Recommendation No. 2."*

## Community Consultation

Surveys regarding the Centennial Square washrooms were sent out to merchants and property owners adjacent to Centennial Square, social service providers and nearby washroom providers (e.g. Market Square). Surveys regarding late night public urinals were also distributed to the Bastion Square Revitalization Association and the Downtown Bar and Cabaret Association. There was a broader survey on public washroom provision in the downtown which served to guide a Roundtable discussion at City Hall on March 15, 2007. The general survey and the circulation list for public consultation are provided in Attachment I. The Downtown Coordinator's email address was posted on late night urinals inviting comment and contact information was also provided in media articles and on the City's website.

Community feedback was generally in strong support of improved access to washrooms and of the initiatives the City was undertaking. When presented with the list of suggestions, most supported a dedicated City washroom, the late night urinal program, and better information on where to find washrooms. Some found the late night urinals program offensive in principle and other washroom providers expressed a reluctance to accept a role in providing for general public demand without initiatives that would reduce the amount of social misuse that occurs.

This feedback has been incorporated into the analysis provided in the appendices of this report.

## Key Issues

For the purposes of organizing this report, public urination and public washrooms were used as the key issues for evaluation. The complete analysis for each topic is included in attached Appendices A and B. The key findings and recommendations are summarized below.

### Public Urination

Public urination associated with bar-goers in the downtown continues to be a problem for merchants, property owners and City Engineering crews. It also presents an offensive smell to visitors and downtown patrons which does not reflect well on the City. The public urinal pilot demonstrated that bar-goers will use such facilities and that the level of use makes a significant difference in the level of public urination in the areas in which they are located. The pilot also demonstrated that the urinals are generally acceptable to the public as well as merchants and property owners in proximity to their locations.

Two options were considered for providing late night urinals on an ongoing basis. The portable urinals are inexpensive to purchase, provide flexibility in location and allow for up to four units to be placed at no additional operational cost; however there is a significant basic operational cost for staffing for their nightly placement, removal and cleaning. Permanent urinals are significantly more cost-effective over a longer term (\$44,000 averaged over 10 years versus \$70,500 for portables), and allow for more hours of operation without increased operational costs. The permanent urinals are considered to be the preferred option, in the long run. A combined approach has also been considered.

### Public Washrooms Access

**Centennial Square** - The reopening of the Centennial Square washrooms immediately reduced the number of problems experienced at private washrooms in the area of the Square, at social services and at other private providers of public washrooms. Based on public feedback, the continued operation of the washrooms is favoured by the public. There are, however, concerns with the poor condition of the washrooms and that the Square in general should be a safe and welcoming public space.

Continuing extended hours of supervised access at the Centennial Square location will continue to provide a safe facility for the street community, while making improvements to their appearance and management will make them more welcoming to the general public. Some improvements have been made to the washrooms to address this, but more are required if the washrooms are to remain open for public use. Supervision of the washrooms is considered necessary to prevent their misuse.

**Other Strategies** - Other key strategies identified through public consultation were:

- Improve information and signage for existing toilet facilities, which would be of benefit in improving effective access to washrooms.
- On an opportunistic or case by case basis, work with private, non-profit and public landowners, developers and tenants to provide washrooms for public use. This approach would be applicable to opportunities that the future revitalization of Centennial Square would present.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the Centennial Square washrooms continue to operate with supervision as an interim strategy and that public washrooms be considered as part of any comprehensive planning and redevelopment. Operational funding for 24 hour access is recommended primarily to provide access for the street community during the late night, recognizing that this approach will continue to be reassessed periodically.

Continuation of the downtown urinal program is recommended with the installation of two permanent urinals and reinstatement of the portable urinals (@ \$5,900/month) until such time as the permanent urinals are installed. An ongoing anti-public urination campaign is also recommended as another means of addressing this problem.

Finally, it is recommended that improvements be made in signage and other informational tools to identify where existing public washrooms are located.

The following table summarizes the recommended options with associated capital and operational costs. Alternative options for several of the recommendations are also provided.

Recommended Option	Capital Cost	Operating Cost	Total
<b>Late Night Urinals</b>			
Install 2 permanent urinals (Urilift)	240,000	20,000	260,000
Reinstating portable urinal program until installation (8 mo. @ \$5,900/mo)		47,200	47,200
Undertake an annual public awareness campaign		5,000	5,000
<b>Centennial Square Washrooms</b>			
Maintain supervised washrooms with access 24 hours daily	20,000	182,000	202,000
<b>Other Strategies</b>			
Improve signage to public washrooms where there is agreement with the provider	5,000	-	5,000
	265,000	254,200	519,200
<b>Existing Budget (2008)</b>	265,000	-	265,000
<b>Funding Required (Contingencies)</b>	-	254,200	254,200

Alternatives to the Recommended Options	Capital Cost	Operating Cost	Total
<b>Late Night Urinals</b>			
Deploy 4 portable (KROS) urinals (purchase 2 additional)	5,000	70,000	75,000
<b>Centennial Square Washrooms</b>			
Maintain supervised washrooms with access 16 hours daily	20,000	122,000	142,000

**Attachment 1. Public Washrooms Survey**

City of Victoria, February 2007 #\_\_\_\_

*Once you have become familiar with the contents of the Public Toilets discussion paper, can you please assist us by responding to the following questions. Please do not feel confined to the provided space and use additional pages as necessary.*

1. Do you agree with the assessment of the issue provided in the report? Do you have additional observations concerning the issue?

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2. Do you have comments on the suggestions at the end of the report? Do you have any additional ideas that might be considered?

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3. Given that the provision of public toilets is not clearly one party's responsibility, what do you think the City's role should be?

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4. What role can your organization assume in improving the availability of public toilet facilities?

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5. Do you have any other comments?

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## Community Consultation List

### Urinal Pilot

BSRA  
Maritime Museum  
Victoria Bar and Cabaret Association  
Central Bar and Grill  
CIBC  
MacDonald's Restaurant  
DVBA  
City Staff  
Police

### Roundtable

DVBA (Ken Kelly)  
Chamber of Commerce (Bruce Carter)  
Tourism Victoria (Lorne Whyte)  
Provincial Capital Commission (Ray Parks)  
Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (Paul Servos)  
BC Restaurant and Food Association (Michelle Stratford)  
Hotel Association of Greater Victoria (Dale Dyck)  
Building Owners and Managers Association  
Rental Owners and Managers Society of BC  
Bay Centre (Darlene Holstein)  
Downtown Residents Association (Robert Randall)  
Downtown Advisory Committee  
VIHA  
AVI  
Streetlink  
Our Place  
Market Square  
Police  
VBCA (Liam Lux)

### Centennial Square

City Hall PSC  
CRD  
QV Restaurant  
Victoria Plaza Hotel  
Carlton Plaza Hotel  
Hotel Douglas  
Cycling Coalition  
SEC's  
H&R Block  
Monaco Hair  
Second Slice  
Honey Bun  
Tombo  
Moores  
City Hall News  
John's Place  
Satin Moon  
La Collina  
MacPherson  
Chapters Books  
DVBA  
Bay Centre  
Sue MacKay  
Commissionaires  
AVI  
Streetlink  
Our Place  
Police

## Appendix A: Public Urination

### Background

A three-month urinal trial was conducted within the context of a threefold strategy including an anti-public urination campaign, greater police enforcement and provision of urinals. A description of the anti-public urination campaign and a sample poster are provided in Attachment A.1.

A pilot project was arranged in order to gauge how successful the late night urinals would be in terms of amount of use and public acceptability (see project description in Attachment A.2). Staff identified a portable product similar in form and function to the retractable urinals described in the discussion paper (Urilift) and two of the units (“KROS” brand) were purchased.

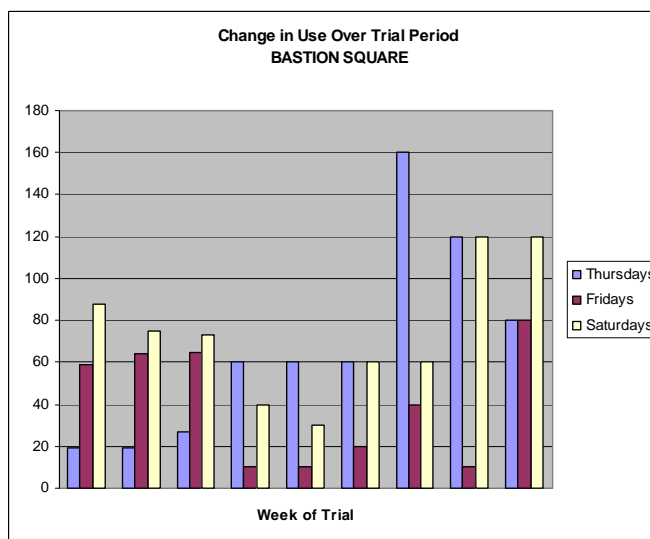
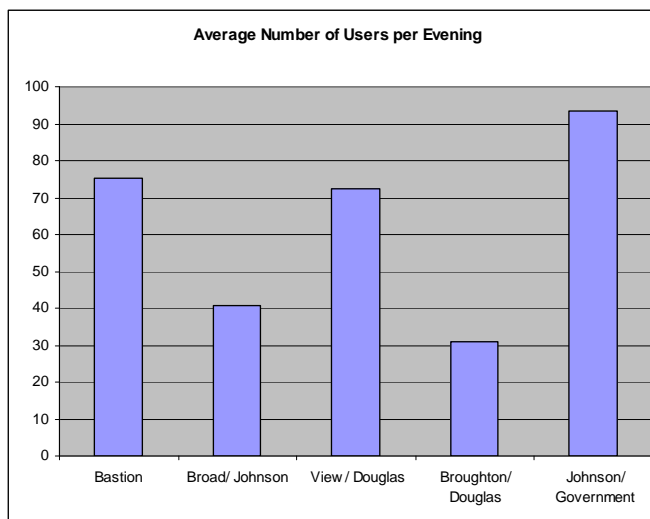
Locations were selected in problematic blocks where most bars were located. The units were sited in open areas where they would be most likely to intercept would-be users. One was placed in the middle of Bastion Square where it remained over the entire duration of the trial. The other unit was situated on several different street corners over the period of the trial, both to determine the most appropriate location as well as to serve as an awareness tool for promoting a change in behaviour.

The units were placed on the street from approximately 10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights over the trial period. Decals were placed on each unit providing the Downtown Coordinator’s email address and phone number and indicating that this was a trial project.

Engineering staff monitored each location over the first part of the trial in order to ensure that they were not subject to abuse and to gauge the number of users. Eventually, monitoring was abandoned and the units were simply chained to sign posts to prevent toppling. Use was estimated based on volume of urine.

Initially, staff observed that patrons found the urinals a novelty and posed for photographs with their friends. There was little abuse of the units in most of the locations, although the occasional attempt was made to tip the units over. Feedback was almost all positive. Very few objections were received and these tended to come from members of the community who seemed to find the concept offensive. Of the feedback that was received, a common question was: “why are there no provisions for females?” The answer is that the City was not intending on providing an amenity to bar patrons. It was strictly an effort to curb a problem by intercepting would-be back alley urinators, the vast majority of whom are men.

In terms of actual use, the urinals proved to be effective (see charts on this page and Attachment A.3). The number of users averaged 75 per night at the Bastion Square location, or 112 litres per weekend. As the pilot was conducted in the middle of winter, there were several nights of bad weather when use of the urinals was low. This reduced the average. In summer it would be expected that a higher number of downtown visitors and better weather would result in significantly higher numbers of users.



Police report that ticketed offences dropped over the trial period, though they were not able to confirm direct causality to the availability of the urinals. Engineering crews noticed a significant drop in both the need to clean up urine in public spaces and the number of complaints received. When the pilot period ended, they noticed an immediate increase in mess.

### Analysis

The trial program showed that the late night placement of urinals was effective in curbing the problem and that they are generally acceptable to the public as well as the merchants and property owners adjacent to their locations.

The anti-public urination campaign garnered media attention and was successful in raising community awareness. Enforcement also played a part in communicating to offenders and the public that the problem is being taken seriously. Efforts to address late night urination are therefore likely best achieved through an integrated program which includes enforcement and community awareness initiatives.

### Options and Resource Implications

Two options have been identified for late night urinals. Other possible options, such as permanent urinals in public space, were not considered feasible based on capital costs and operating costs for appropriate servicing. The KROS portable urinal option is the continuation of the arrangement used for the trial whereby portable units are placed on the street weekend evenings and removed early each morning. Capital costs for this option are minimal. Most of the cost is operational and is related to the handling and servicing of the urinals.

The second option is a retractable urinal (Urilift) which has significantly higher capital costs, but allows for greater flexibility in operating days and hours without additional costs. Operational costs for the KROS units indicate that costs do not change (fixed) for up to four units. Each additional Urilift requires additional operational (variable) cost (based on information from the supplier).

Type	Capital Cost (per unit)	Operational Cost (annual)		Cost for Options over 10 Years		Pros	Cons
		Fixed (for all units)	Variable (per unit)	Units	Total Average Annual Cost		
Portable urinal (KROS)	\$2,500	\$70,000	\$0	4*	\$70,500	- low capital cost - low operational cost for added units - flexible locations - allows other uses (events)	- operating costs - less impressive?
Permanent Retractable Urinal (Urilift)	\$120,000	\$0	\$10,000	2	\$44,000	- lower annual cost over time - strong statement - allows flexible hours/days	- high initial capital cost - stationary

\* The City currently owns two of these units

Over a ten year period, the overall costs for the two permanent retractable urinals (\$44,000) are less than for the four portable units (\$70,500). The table above shows options for four portable urinals, taking advantage of no change in operational costs for up to four units. An option for two permanent urinals is also shown, which shows the lower annual cost over 10 years. Two locations would be adequate to address important areas of need, while allowing for significantly lower annual costs.

As discussed above, addressing late night bar patron urination is best approached in an integrated fashion. Therefore anti-urination promotional efforts, such as the postering campaign, should be provided with resources to ensure they are undertaken from time to time (e.g. start of semester, prior to Christmas). It is recommended that \$5,000 be allocated annually for this purpose and be used in cooperative efforts with bar owners and the other downtown organizations (e.g. DVBA) where and when possible.

## **Appendix A. - Anti-Public Urination Campaign (2006)**

### **Attachment A. 1.**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the campaign will be to achieve a shift in social behaviour from urinating on outdoor public and private property. The target audience is males in the 20-30 year old age bracket who frequent the bars later in the evenings.

This will complement the City's other measures in attempting to reduce public urination including a public urinal pilot project, 24 hour opening of the Centennial Square public washrooms and greater enforcement by Police.

#### **Method**

- Posters on walls of mens' washrooms in bars, cabarets and bar-restaurants,
- Ads in print media (Monday, NewsGroup),
- Posters on poster cylinders (optional),
- Announcements at bar closings (optional).

The ads will consist of an image and a caption using humour, appeals to decency and peer pressure to achieve the objectives.

There will be a tag line to brand all of the messaging.

#### **Duration**

The initial campaign will run through December into the beginning of January. Ongoing messaging will be considered as will the next wave of more intensive campaigning.

#### **Process**

A communications person will be contracted to coordinate and implement the campaign. A graphic designer will be contracted to assist in the creative design of the message content and design. The sponsoring groups will act in an advisory capacity and may make suggestions for messaging content. Bar owners will agree to post materials in their establishments.

#### **Budget**

The budget is set at \$7,000. Any additional funds will be used to increase print runs or ad purchases.

- Design work for materials           \$2000
- Ad purchase                           \$3,000
- Printing                               \$1,000
- Coordinator                          \$1,000

## **Appendix A Public Urinals Pilot Project Attachment A. 2.**

### **Purpose**

Public urinals are being considered as one part of a three-fold strategy to address late night urination on public and private properties generally attributed to people patronizing drinking establishments in the downtown. The other elements of this strategy are a promotional campaign to shift this social behaviour and greater enforcement efforts on the part of the Police.

### **Role**

The public urinals are intended to intercept persons who would otherwise be urinating in a non-designated area. It is not intended as a service to promote outdoor urination, but to curb the negative impacts of existing behaviour.

As such, the urinals are to be present only where and when the problem exists, typically on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. This is considered to be during later hours and immediately following late night bar closures when there are very few, or no other toilet facilities immediately available.

### **Impacts**

The intention is for the urinals to present no unwanted sights and smells for merchants, hotel guests or residents. The urinals are not to be located adjacent to open businesses where they would be unacceptable to operators.

Temporary urinals used for the trials will be installed late in the evenings when businesses are closed and removed from the sites early each morning. If installed, permanent urinals will retract into the ground where their presence will be invisible to daytime businesses.

### **Location**

It is recognized that bar-goers will not venture very far from their paths to urinate. Urinals will therefore be placed as close to pedestrian corridors as possible. The locations will be close to areas where bars are concentrated and where Police and City staff have witnessed problematic behaviour. The first two locations will be in Bastion Square and on View Street at Douglas Street.

### **Notification**

There are not expected to be any impacts to adjacent merchants and property owners and no concerns have been expressed to date. Notification will be provided as a courtesy to premises in the immediate vicinity of the trial location.

### **Pilot Schedule**

Two urinals will be installed in two separate locations starting Thursday November 16, 2006 for three consecutive nights. The hours of operation will be from 10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. The locations will change the following weekend. Feedback will be gathered from citizens, Police, merchants and city staff involved in the pilot. The amount of use will also be gauged at the various locations. Refinements to the pilot program will be made based on our experience as the trial progresses.

### **Review**

The basis for evaluating whether the permanent installation of urinals will proceed will be based on their level of use, the degree to which they curb the problem of public urination and the acceptability of the urinals by the general public, merchants and property owners.

**Appendix A Pilot Urinal Use  
Attachment A.3.**

**Evening Urinal Pilot**

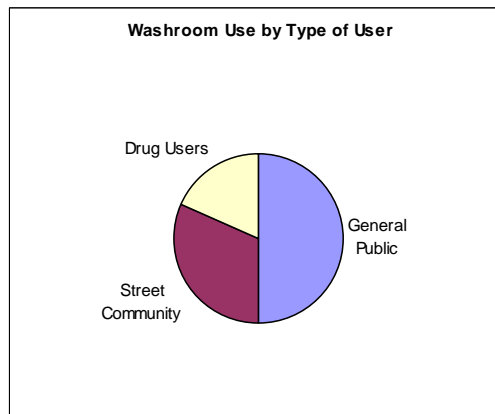
		Location				
		Bastion	Broad/ Johnson	View/ Douglas	Broughton/ Douglas	Johnson/ Government
November 2006	16	19		29		
	17	59		32		
	18	88		87		
	23	19			2	
	24	64			46	
	25	75			45	
December 2006	7	27	18			
	8	65	48			
	9	73	58			
	14	60	60			
	15	10	20			
	16	40	40			
	21	60		60		
	22	10		5		
	23	30		30		
	28	60		60		
	29	20		5		
	30	60		60		
January 2007	11	160				160
	12	40				60
	13	60				60
	18	120				120
	19	10				40
	20	120				120
	25	120		120		
	26	120		120		
	27	160		160		
Feb 2007	1	80		80		
	2	80		80		
	3	120		160		
sum		<b>2029</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>1088</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>560</b>
average		<b>75</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>93</b>

Number of uses either by count or estimated @ 0.5 litres per person

## APPENDIX B: PUBLIC WASHROOM ACCESS

### I. Centennial Square

The Centennial Square washrooms were reopened on a 24-hour basis in mid-July, 2006. The intention of the washrooms is to provide broad access to all user groups – the general public, City Hall clients, Centennial Square visitors, special event attendees, the street community and bar patrons. The chart to the right shows the general usage of the washrooms.



These washrooms are used regularly throughout the entire day (see chart) with the exception of the early morning hours after the bars have closed – approximately 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. The next chart shows that the overall monthly level of use of the washrooms has dropped since their reopening. The data change from September 2006 to March 2007 indicates that there was a 49% decrease of users identified as street community members and an 87% decrease in general public use. In September 2006, the street community represented 31% of washroom users, while in March 2007 this group constituted 64% of users. (Note: some large events data were removed for September).

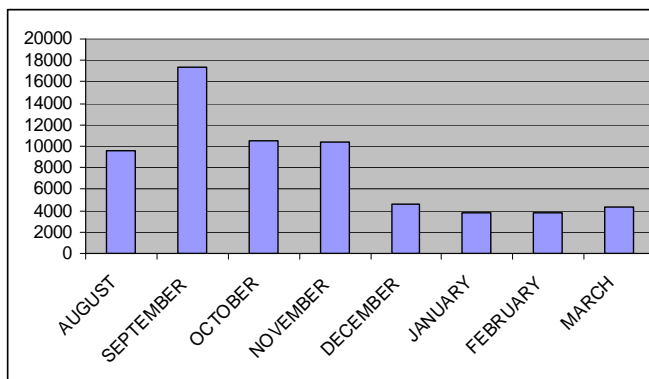
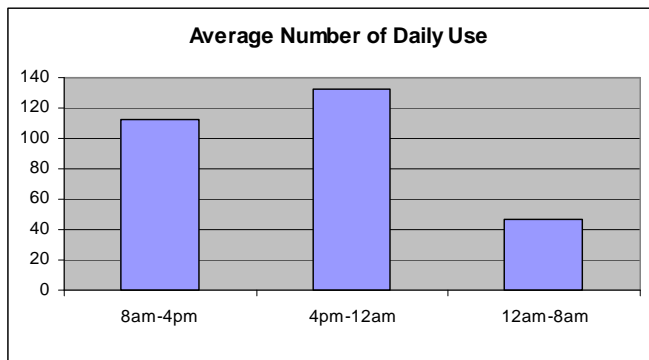
#### Street Community

When reopened, nearby social service providers were given posters to assist in advising their clients of the availability of the washrooms, in order to encourage latent demand for this service.

Supervision of the washrooms was provided by commissionaires during all operating hours. Commissionaires recognize the various user groups coming to the washrooms, often communicating on a first-name basis. The street population and especially the drug-using community return to the washroom on a regular basis. In addition to use of toilets, the washrooms are used for shaving, washing, brushing teeth and applying makeup. While the use of drugs is not condoned, drug users are recognized and not prevented from entering the washrooms.

Despite the presence of the commissionaires, the washrooms were increasingly subject to abuse by the drug-using community. As many as 15 people at a time could be in the washroom dealing and administering drugs, as well as engaging in sexual acts.

In November, the operating arrangement was changed to allow only one user at a time and to keep one of the washrooms closed. There was initial resistance from members of the street community to the single user policy, but once it was recognized that this was not negotiable, they accepted the arrangement. Drug users continue to frequent the washrooms, but both drug users and the non-drug-using street community have expressed an appreciation for having a safe and orderly toilet facility restored. There are occasional incidents, but inspections and the one-at-a-time policy has kept the situation manageable.



Line-ups for the washrooms occur from time to time during normal hours. Line-ups are often associated with the street community who typically use the washrooms for longer periods (there is a 5 minute limit), or when there is an event nearby that draws more of the public to the area. While drug users are generally patient, other members of the street community occasionally get frustrated and will use open public space in the Square. When seniors or families arrive at such times, the commissionaires will generally open the other washroom to allow them to use the facility.

### Bar-Goers

Bar goers (subjectively identified by commissionaires) do not generally frequent the washrooms, except late on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. They are also reported as frequently seen openly using other areas of the Square during these times. Use by bar-goers has diminished since the closing of the Hotel Douglas pub.

### Special Events

The general public uses the washrooms and this increases when there is an event in the Square. The washrooms have enough capacity for the high volume of use required for the duration of these activities. As attendance at an event increases, the drug user and street community use tends to decline as washroom users no longer enjoy the same degree of privacy.

Varying demand presents difficulties for security personnel in varying from the single user policy. They must discriminate between street users and other members of the public with whom they do not expect any problems and therefore can allow less restrictive use. Those managing events programming in Centennial Square have expressed dissatisfaction with the ambiguity of when to increase access and the lack of free access to the washrooms, feeling it creates a negative impression for event attendees who have been invited to the Square for an enjoyable experience.

### Public Feedback

Public feedback from surveys and comments received via email and word of mouth over the last year indicates that:

- the reopening of the washrooms is reducing the demand and misuse at neighbouring washrooms, as well as urination and defecation adjacent to their properties,
- the washrooms in the Square are generally perceived as unclean, unattractive and primarily catering to the street community.
- some felt that the washrooms attracted unwelcome activities to the Square.
- most believed that the washrooms should stay open, but efforts should be made to make them more appealing.

Therefore, despite orderly operation, the public is finding that street community use and the poor condition of the washrooms are creating an unwelcoming environment for the general public. To address these specific concerns, a thorough cleaning was conducted of the washrooms in late May, and improvements such as painting, signage and lighting changes were completed in June.

## **Analysis**

### Location

The current location of the washrooms under the parkade presents safety and security difficulties. Sightlines are poor around and at the facility and the washrooms themselves are not of a design and materials that are sensitive to current security concerns. Though some improvements to the washrooms have been made over the years, they have not been substantially upgraded since construction over 30 years ago and they do not provide a welcoming environment. Renovating the washrooms would improve their appearance and assist in addressing safety concerns, but would not overcome their problematic location.

It is recognized that there is a longstanding Council-approved plan for revitalization of Centennial Square, which has been occurring incrementally and ultimately the existing buildings and plaza may be redeveloped. If a public washroom is to be maintained at this location beyond the life of the current facilities,

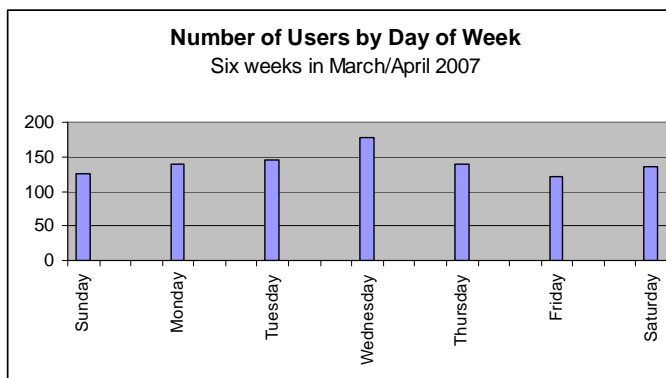
redevelopment presents an opportunity to consider the relocation of the washroom within the Square to a more suitable location closer to (24 hour) traffic and with clear sightlines.

If operation of the current washrooms is to continue, a modest capital investment should be made in further addressing security concerns and improving their comfort. As stated above, some improvements have recently been made to address immediate concerns.

Operating Hours

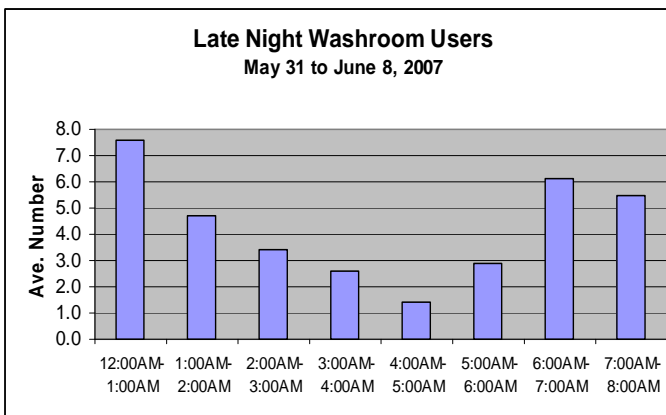
Another issue relating to continued operation of the washrooms is the operating hours. The intention of operating the washrooms for 24 hours seven days a week was to gauge demand and inform decision-making about recommended hours of operation.

It can be seen in the chart to the right that the washrooms are used equally each day of the week. There is low use during the night (see next chart), especially in the winter possibly due to the decrease in the number of the street population sleeping outdoors. Overall street community use may be affected by greater access to washrooms at social service facilities.



Condition of the washrooms may be a factor for use by the general public. Decreased use may also be attributable to less activity in the Square, shorter days and fewer visitors to the downtown over the winter.

The 24-hour access serves several other purposes. It provides simplicity of communication to the community that the washrooms are always open. It supports the City Police by providing a rationale for enforcing bylaws when individuals are urinating or defecating in public within a reasonable distance of the washroom. The question is whether these reasons and the level of use during the night warrant the additional costs of keeping the washrooms open at all times.



Method of Supervision

Another element of continued use relates to the method of supervision. Operating a washroom without supervision is not a viable option. Even where there is higher use, which tends to dissuade misuse of the facility, constant monitoring and cleaning are required.

There may be opportunities to examine other models than the current approach involving commissionaires performing the supervisory role and City cleaning staff servicing the washrooms every four hours. The objective would be to achieve a higher level of cleanliness and orderly operation through a greater degree of ownership and approachability. For example, in the City of Vancouver's washrooms in the East End, attendants carry phones and are not intimidated by the street community who in turn tend to respect established behavioural boundaries. This relies on a good safety protocol as well as appropriate staff attitude and training. Other models involving other traditional service providers or non-traditional providers such as transitional employment of the street community might be explored further.

Access to washrooms during periods of increased demand requires resolution (e.g. during events). Staff believe that one attendant can manage the washrooms during periods of elevated use without relying exclusively on the current single user policy. This is contingent on implementation of further security measures which will aid the attendant in supervising the washrooms (e.g. lower cubicle walls). Until such

improvements are made, additional personnel may be required to support special events in the Square, with additional costs.

## **Options and Resource Implications**

There are three options for keeping the Centennial Square washrooms open in the context of maintaining a public washroom to serve public demand. These include maintaining the washrooms until the Square is redeveloped, relocating the washrooms, or restricting washroom availability in favour of another option for addressing public washroom need.

If the current washrooms are to be maintained, capital should be spent on immediate improvements. Additional costs for operation are based on the current operating arrangement with additional staff during special events for the balance of summer programming and are considered the maximum regardless of supervision method.

Constructing a new facility would provide a needed well-designed and appropriately located facility. It would, however, force the consideration of a new Square design in order to identify the best location for the washroom. In the short-term this is not a practical option, but is a long-term consideration. However, the City would not be able to take advantage of funding sources or development that may provide for a portion of the costs.

The third option of closing or substantially diminishing the role of the washrooms in favour of other strategies such as sponsorship of private washrooms and installation of smaller unsupervised washrooms in other areas of need, would likely leave late night social needs unaddressed and unmanaged. It would require similar if not greater capital and operational costs, depending on the degree of commitment to washroom provision.

The preferred choice is Option 1 (maintain current location) with a modest investment in capital improvements as an interim solution, to allow time for consideration of the redevelopment of the Square and to leverage any funding opportunities such as the Spirit Square grant program or through a new building in the Square into which the washrooms may be incorporated. This is, however, a compromise as the challenges of the current location would have to be met for this period of time and capital would have to be spent to improve the existing facilities.

Of the operating hours, in the interest of providing widely accessible hours for reasons identified above, 24-hour access is preferred. However, decrease in use and low late night numbers suggest that it may be advisable to retain discretion to modify operating hours. Improving the condition of the washrooms and the more open exposure of the Square with the removal of Antoine's Restaurant may increase use. Operating hours should therefore stay the same over the short-term, but if there is no increase after improvements are made, hours could be scaled back to exclude the late night access. This should be monitored to determine whether conditions (e.g. level of use, changes in social issues) warrant continued late night operation.

## **II. Other Strategy Options**

In addition to conducting and receiving feedback on the late night urinals and the Centennial Square washroom operation, feedback was solicited on the other suggestions provided in the discussion paper. Feedback from surveys, staff input and comments received at a stakeholder Roundtable are reflected in the observations.

### **i. Sign and identify washroom locations on maps.**

A recurring theme was the need to better utilize existing services by letting visitors and regional shoppers know where public washrooms are located. This is not an expensive proposition, but requires that other major public washroom providers support identification of their facilities on maps and street signs. Signage would be well-placed, distinctive and of a consistent form so that it can be readily recognized by washroom seekers.

A signage program would involve the identification of suitable public washrooms throughout the downtown area (depending on acceptance by the facility management), and installation of the signage and perhaps other navigational tools on site.

The following emerged from community feedback:

- Install street signage to key washroom locations in the downtown using universal symbols and showing hours of operation;
- Consider other visitor-targeted washroom location information in the future (City, Tourism Victoria, Downtown Victoria Business Association, Hotel Association, Restaurant Association, etc.);
- Prepare maps which identify locations of washrooms catering to the street community (City, Social Service providers);

The cost to the City for supporting these options would be less than \$5,000, one time.

**ii. Promote awareness of the availability of toilets in retail premises.**

Feedback from most of those consulted was that dry goods retailers should not be looked to for increasing public washroom availability. Food and beverage operators, however, should be providing access to their washrooms. Most felt that private providers would be willing to make their facilities more accessible if there were more options available for the street community, which would reduce the risk of misuse.

No further pursuit of this option is suggested other than that addressed in (i) above.

**iii. Encourage program for tourist access to existing private facilities.**

Though visitors report experiencing more difficulty finding washrooms in the evening and feel obliged to make purchases at businesses where they are requesting use of washrooms, feedback was received that this is not important enough to warrant extra attention at this time. Improved signage and mapped locations of washrooms targeted to user groups are considered adequate measures, as described in the suggestion above.

**iv. Provide financial support to providers of existing semi-public washrooms.**

This was considered as a suggestion because these providers shoulder the burden of providing washrooms to the general public beyond their customers. Therefore, compensation may be considered appropriate and, in turn, these providers would be requested to have their facilities identified as available to the public.

The location of the Provincial Capital Commission and Bay Centre washrooms in particular receive high levels of use. Management of both operations feel that, unless social misuse is addressed, they do not favour broad promotion of their facilities. The public is currently not precluded from entering either of these facilities and several visitors' maps currently indicate both locations. There is therefore little to be gained by compensating these providers and efforts would likely be best to address access issues elsewhere, which in turn will take some of the pressure off these providers.

Opportunities where cooperation is possible should be explored on a case by case basis. For example, the Bay Centre is currently planning to renovate their washrooms with safety and security concerns in mind. It may be possible to share knowledge amongst washroom providers with regard to best practices and sources of appropriate products.

**v. Assess the opportunities for private provision of washroom services.**

In areas where there are gaps in service, there may be businesses with suitable excess capacity or a desire to enter into a partnership to provide washrooms for public use. Considerations of such opportunities should include signage, hours of operation and compensation. Agreements would be required to clearly state standards and responsibilities and protocols for managing the washrooms.

This strategy is best applied on a case by case basis where there is a location of need. Where City support is required, these cases would be presented to Council as opportunities are identified.

**vi. Explore opportunities for public washrooms to be identified as public amenities in new developments.**

Well-designed public washrooms may be incorporated in new developments as public amenities. This could result in well-designed facilities in key locations which are currently underserved. Comments were favourable for this concept, however, concern remained with how such facilities could be effectively maintained and operated.

This strategy is best applied on a case by case basis in rezoning negotiations where there is an area of need.

**vii. Establish a new dedicated public washroom facility.**

This suggestion is an extension of the discussion above on the advisability of continued location of a washroom in Centennial Square vis a vis other strategies. A renewed dedicated washroom location here would serve an area not otherwise served for visitors and an increasing residential population. It is also central for the street community and would be expected to reduce pressure on other service providers. It would also provide washrooms for events in Centennial Square and would make a strong leadership statement on the part of the City.

No other potential location has been identified that would serve such a broad spectrum of needs as well as Centennial Square, especially given the possible hours of operation. There are no alternative facilities in the area. Market Square is the closest accessible location, but it is privately owned and not well-designed to safely serve the public. New washrooms may also be located within new developments in this general area, however, these are not likely to be staffed continuously and again would not address the immediate needs of City Hall and Centennial Square.

Feedback has been negative regarding the current condition of the washrooms and its reputation as catering to the street community. However, many feel that it is important to maintain a public facility which the street community can access, especially where the washrooms in other social services are distant or only available for certain hours.

A new facility should therefore be designed to be of a standard that will be welcoming to the general public and still be accessible to the street community. In Victoria's compact downtown, a "landmark public washroom" would likely draw from several blocks around and serve the various user groups. Given that design of a new washroom would consider safety and security, use levels would likely increase better justifying cost.

Cost efficiencies are most viable if the development of a new washroom is incorporated into the (re)development of the area. In the short term, it would likely be best to continue with the operation of the current facility in the interim.

Cost Recovery

Cost recovery for washroom operation may be achieved by some form of revenue generation, as was recommended by the Downtown Advisory Committee (see Attachment B.1). Advertisements may be installed in and on washrooms depending on the visibility to viable amounts of traffic. However this would require further review should advertising or retailing or automated vending be considered.

Cost recovery options can be reviewed when relocation of the washrooms is being considered.

Alternatives to a Centennial Square Facility

Alternatives to maintaining the Centennial Square location would entail foregoing the development of a new washroom in favour of other strategies. This would likely consist of establishing washrooms in other locations of need. One option, for example, may be to make improvements to the Johnson Street parkade washrooms which would facilitate greater access, but would require further analysis to address staffing implications.

As retention of the Centennial Square location is recommended, additional washrooms would not be actively pursued and would only be presented to Council as opportunities are identified.

**viii. Support the inclusion of bathing and toilet facilities at downtown social services.**

Organizations like Our Place and Streetlink provide limited washroom access. Feedback received through community consultation indicated strong support for enhancing services for the street community. This included toilets, as well as bathing facilities and safe drug consumption sites. These services were believed to be important for the street community itself and were also viewed as a means of reducing the misuse of other facilities in the downtown.

Currently, the extended and supervised hours at the Centennial Square washrooms have increased washroom availability for the street community. Our Place is relocating to a new facility which will also improve access to washroom facilities and Streetlink has made efforts to make its washrooms more accessible to users over the period of this study.

This strategy is best applied on a case by case basis where an opportunity is identified. Where City support is required, these cases would be presented to Council as opportunities are identified.

## Appendix B. Downtown Advisory Committee Memo Attachment B. 1.



**Date:** June 21, 2007  
**To:** Mayor & Council  
**From:** Downtown Advisory Committee  
**Regarding:** Recommendations Regarding Access to Public Washrooms in the Downtown Area

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The Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC) has met and discussed the issue of access to public washrooms in the downtown area. Information from the staff report of September 2006 (*Public Toilets in Downtown Victoria: A Discussion paper*) and a subsequent meeting of downtown stakeholders (including DAC) have been incorporated into the thinking and background information.

The Downtown Advisory Committee has provided the following suggestions to the Downtown Coordinator and is forwarding these recommendations to Mayor Lowe and Council for their information:

### Recommendation

The Downtown Advisory Committee recommends that:

SHORT TERM (immediately)

- 1. Urinals (pop-up or portable) should be provided in other heavy traffic/bar areas (e.g. Bastion square) to curb public urination.**

Public urination should be addressed through the most cost-effective means available. Downtown bar owners should contribute to the costs for providing this service – an idea being progressive levy based on closure time (e.g. later closing = higher levy)

- 2. Businesses be provided with a downtown map marking the location of public or semi-public (e.g. the Bay) toilets, for use with customers**

MEDIUM TERM (within the next year)

- 1. Two aesthetically pleasing and welcoming washrooms with 24 hour access and potentially supervision be available in the downtown.**

- One washroom to be located in the Northern part of downtown (Centennial Square)
- A second washroom to be located in the Southern area (Tourism Victoria office vicinity)

Funding for washrooms should come from the City and other organizations such as the Provincial Capital Commission and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority – the latter two specifically given the re-development of the Belleville Terminal area.

Advertising on facilities should also be considered as a potential revenue stream to help offset costs.

Social concerns should be given attention through City support (perhaps some funding) for provision of accessible bathing facilities at social service locations, rather than at public washrooms.

## **Background**

A wide variety of factors were considered in making these recommendations. These include, among others:

- Varying needs of diverse groups, from residents to homeless to bar patrons to tourists – hygiene, toileting, safety, perception of “world class city”
- Up front costs, functionality and ongoing maintenance requirements of providing various types of facilities from fully staffed full-service facilities to staffed toilets to un-staffed and urinals
- Ideal locations, based on existing facilities (public or semi-public) and usage requirements
- Ability and appropriateness of cost recovery methods such as advertising, levies or taxes to business owners, cost sharing with service facilities, the PCC, or the GVHA