

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on May 21, 2025

4. Places to Be and Places to Go

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all residents and visitors;
2. Accessible drop-in spaces and public washrooms are essential for the dignity, health, and well-being of both unhoused individuals and housed individuals;
3. The lack of accessible public washroom facilities can be uncomfortable for visitors, in particular women and families with small children, but also tourists and crowds for large public events from fireworks to FIFA;
4. The lack of accessible public washroom facilities disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including unhoused or underhoused people, elderly people and people with disabilities. Most public washrooms are located in Vancouver's parks, and only available from dusk to dawn;
5. The lack of public washrooms impacts the city, health authority, and local businesses. Open defecation brings significant engineering costs, water use, disruption to small businesses, and major public health issues like dysentery or Shigella. A disease of destitution, severe, multidrug-resistant (MDR) shigellosis has been on the rise in Vancouver ¹ "like wildfire among people who don't have access to toilets, sinks, or showers";
6. Business Improvement Areas in Vancouver are sounding the alarm as public defecation in the city reaches new heights, the issue has "certainly gotten worse" in recent years and has skyrocketed particularly in the previous two years²;
7. The Vancouver Charter (Part XV-Health s.330)³ empowers the local government's role regarding insanitation: (b) preventing, prohibiting, and remedying insanitary conditions and places in the city; and (i) for acquiring real property, and for constructing and maintaining thereon or thereunder lavatories,

¹ CBC, January 2025 | Endless diarrhea and exhaustion: the stomach bug making the rounds among the most vulnerable <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/shigella-infection-canada-1.7437238>

² CTV News, May 2025 | Frustrations rise over human waste on Vancouver Streets <https://www.ctvnews.ca/vancouver/article/frustrations-rise-over-human-waste-on-vancouver-streets-prompting-return-of-poop-fairy-program/>

³ King's Printer Victoria | Vancouver Charter https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/vanch_16

urinals, water-closets, and the like conveniences, and for constructing and maintaining such conveniences upon or under a street;

8. The lack of accessible drop-in and daytime shelter spaces disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including unhoused or underhoused people. In many cases, street loitering and daytime encampments are a direct result of lack of drop-in spaces, as most shelters are only open dusk to dawn. Anecdotally many people congregate in alleys, on streets, and under awnings because they have no where else to be, which presents a challenge to disincentivizing loitering, camping, and certain forms of street disorder;
9. Demonstrably, according to the City's recent Storefront Reports and Update on Vacancy Analysis reporting, many of the areas with higher levels of loitering and street disorder also have some of the highest rates of storefront vacancy;
10. The lack of accessible drop-in centres has direct cost impacts on City engineering and police services and more indirectly on business viability, retail districts, tourism and perceptions of public safety;
11. The City's Vibrant Vancouver strategy calls for high-quality city services and public infrastructure that make Vancouver a healthy, safe, beautiful and enjoyable place for everyone, and strive to alleviate barriers to residents' well-being and sense of belonging.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to complete a needs assessment and identify locations and funding necessary to support places to be and places to go, by Q3 2025 specifically:
 - a. Accessible daytime drop-in shelter space
 - b. Accessible universal washrooms

FURTHER THAT Considerations for accessible daytime drop-in shelter spaces:

- Identify and repurpose underutilized buildings and spaces for drop-in centers.
- Ensure these spaces are equipped with essential amenities such as seating, charging stations, and access to information and services, and washrooms.
- Collaborate with local organizations to provide support services, including mental health resources, job assistance, and social services.
- Are located strategically in areas with high prevalence of unhoused or underhoused people, street loitering, and near overnight shelters or unhoused serving services.

AND FURTHER THAT Considerations for accessible public washrooms:

- Are located in high-traffic areas, including downtown and other busy neighborhoods, close to transit.
- Ensure these washrooms are accessible to people with disabilities and are maintained to good hygiene standards.
- Implement a system for regular cleaning and maintenance to ensure the facilities remain safe and usable.

B. THAT the Mayor writes to the Provincial Government including Ministers of Health, Poverty Reduction, Infrastructure and Public Safety respectively, and to Vancouver Coastal Health with strongly worded request for capital and operating funds to support, and call to action to support places to be and places to go.

* * * * *