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**To:** ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)  
**CC:** ["City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"](#)  
**Date:** 3/23/2021 6:58:59 PM  
**Subject:** Update on Coopers' Park Washroom Pilot

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Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to provide an update on the Coopers' Park washroom pilot, which continues to receive coverage in the news media.

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Washroom Strategy—approved on November 2, 2020—recommended piloting the Portland Loo in three locations including at Coopers' Park. This is to help address a high demand for washroom provision in Vancouver. This was one of three sites selected because it will serve an estimated 30,000 users, as it is in a popular park next to the Seawall and a dense downtown neighbourhood. Washrooms are an essential public service and everyone is entitled to safe, clean and accessible facilities.

### **Why the Portland Loo?**

The Washroom Strategy investigated a range of washroom options, but landed on Portland Loo (a prefabricated washroom) because it proved to have several advantages:

- Durable design that is resistant to fire, graffiti and vandalism
- Additional safety features
- ADA/Universally accessible
- Tamper resistant hand-washing stations
- Anti-graffiti exterior
- A bicycle or stroller easily fits inside
- Discourages lingering and crime inside

The design uses slatted panels to provide privacy to the user, and airflow, but also allows people outside to see the floor of the stall. This provides added safety if someone inside needs assistance, and allows medical emergencies to be attended to by first responders.

The cost of the Portland Loo (approximately \$150,000 - \$185,000 CDN per unit) is consistent for all municipalities who purchase them (with some allowances for cost increases over time depending on when other municipalities purchased their units e.g. the price of steel has recently increased due to the pandemic). The key difference in the costs between other municipalities and the City of Vancouver is related to the specifics of the site and installation costs, along with the reality that construction costs overall in Vancouver are higher than other municipalities. Reporting on costs for other municipalities also may not include all of the site prep and installation costs involved in a park site, for example if other cities are installing where utilities are located closer to the washroom site. Some of the cost considerations include:

- Design consultant fees including, civil, mechanical, electrical and structural engineering
- Environmental soils assessment and mitigation (i.e. potential soil issues and proximity to water for this particular site)
- Trenching and installation of sewer, water and electrical services (i.e. longer connections are more costly)
- Site preparation, reinforced concrete pad, electrical panels, and frost-protected water and sanitary connections
- Assembly, installation, and commissioning of the unit
- Building permit and inspection work
- Project management fees
- Contingencies and escalation

The City and Park Board were recently successful in applying for a \$645,000 grant for the full project costs to purchase and install the Portland Loo in Coopers' Park through the [British Columbia Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program](#) (CERIP). This application was based on a high-level cost estimate, and the actual amount spent will depend on design and implementation and whether issues are encountered that require the use of contingencies. Staff will be managing the costs of the project very closely with the aim of realizing any potential savings relative to the estimate.

Portland Loos are designed for minimal operating and maintenance costs due to their stainless steel materials and construction, and are able to be cleaned by pressure washing. They are also able to withstand the fires that we currently experience on a regular basis with the small washroom structures.

It should be noted this is a pilot project that will be evaluated and, if successful, the Park Board and the City would apply learnings to roll out future locations. The Portland Loo at Coopers' Park is planned to be installed by the end of 2021. Once implemented, the project should yield significant overall savings and secure ongoing provision of much-needed safe washroom services.

Thanks,  
Karen

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*The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples*