



COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	November 3, 2022
SUBJECT:	Winterizing Public Washrooms - Pilot Program Update (City Wide) (ES22010)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Cynthia Graham Acting-Director, Environmental Services Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

During the month of October, washroom facilities in Parks were shut down for the fall and winter seasons except for the locations approved for the second and final year of the Winter Washroom Pilot Program. Winter Washrooms will be available daily during daylight hours starting November 1, 2022 until May 1, 2023.

Year 1 of the Pilot Program began in November 2021. Some of the challenges encountered in the first year included damage to facilities, graffiti, maintaining cleaning standards and adding security infrastructure.

Some examples of damage to facilities that required repairs or replacement included towel dispensers being pulled off walls, a fire at T.B. McQuesten Park, burst pipes due to cold temperatures, and asphalt heaving due to frost that prevented doors from properly opening.

Graffiti on both the interior and exterior of the washrooms was also an area of concern requiring increased service levels for prompt removal.

Challenges with janitorial cleaning service included the presence of discarded needle waste in washrooms which was a safety concern for the service provider. Illegal dumping of personal items required extra care and effort to address.

Opening and closing services were also hampered throughout the pilot project, for example, the contractor was not able to open due to frozen locks, they are missing sites

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OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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on a route or opened late, and occasionally they opened washrooms that should have remained closed due to damage or the wrong washroom on site was opened. Additional staff time and oversight measures did not fully resolve these matters.

Damage to portable toilets occurred due to tipping over of portable toilets, this was resolved by bolting down the units.

Planned security enhancements for Year 1 were not completed during the first Pilot term. This delay in implementation was a result of impacts to the Corporate Security team due to staffing resource challenges related to the increased scope requirements for ongoing response and mitigation to support various City divisions in the delivery of traditional and COVID-19 based City services to the community as the restrictions and measures continued. Corporate Security has been able to build on its staffing challenges through 2022 and is in the process of procuring services for the original Year 1 scope, as well as, adding the Year 2 locations to the scope. This project is identified as high priority, to be implemented as soon as possible to meet the winter opening requirement.

For Year 2, staff will work to resolve the above issues with the following actions: funding a higher level of service required for cleaning duties, making available an ice melter for use on frozen locks, retain the services of a property management company to open/close and to streamline service response.

Staff and council were interested to understand how well the pilot was received by the residents of Hamilton, and a survey was hosted on the Engage Hamilton website. Appendix “A” to Communication Update – Engage Hamilton, Engagement Results, provides a summary of those engagement activities.

The major themes reported by Survey Respondents were: the winter washroom program represents a value-added service, a washroom facility is preferred over a portable toilet, 20% of respondents would prefer to use a washroom in an arena, library or recreation centre before using a park washroom during the fall/winter season. The top three parks sites visited by respondents were: Pier 4 Park, Dundas Driving Park and Gage Park, these top three sites represented 50% of the reported use. More than half of respondents (55%) said the washrooms were open when they needed to use them, half of respondents said availability of daylight hours was a sufficient level of service, more than half of respondents preferred extended hours in the morning and evening with responses favouring extended evening availability.

The locations approved under the Winter Washroom Pilot Program, year 1 were:

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Ward	Park
1	Alexander Park
1	Victoria Park Baseball Washrooms
2	Pier 4 Park (Gartshore Thomson) Building)
3	Woodland Park
3	Gage Park Washroom (by Baseball Diamond)
3	Gage Park Washroom (by Splash Pad)
6	Mohawk Sports Park Parks storage building
6 & 7	Portable Toilet: Mountain Drive Park (if desired)
7	T. B. McQuesten Park
7	Portable Toilet: Eastmount Park
8	Bruce Park
8	Buchanan Park
8	Portable Toilet: Sam Lawrence Park
8	William Connell Park
13	Dundas Driving Park
15	Portable Toilet: Joe Sam's Park

Additional locations approved under the Winter Washroom Pilot Program for year 2 are listed below.

Ward	Park	Where applicable, revisions to planned Service are noted
1	Churchill Park	Portable Toilets will be available. (Park washroom winterization was not feasible).
1	HAAA Park	No change to proposal
2	Bayfront Park	Portable Toilets will be available. (Park washroom winterization was not feasible).
3	JC Beemer Park	No change to proposal
5	Confederation - Beach Park - Sports Park	No change to proposal
5	Hamilton Beach Trail (Lift Bridge)	No change to proposal
5	Hamilton Beach Trail (Kinsmen Park)	Portable Toilet will be available (Washroom winterization was not feasible).
6	Mohawk Sports Park Hornets Building	This building will not be opened, the washrooms located at the Parks Storage Building will be available.

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6	Mohawk Sports Park Track Building	This building will not be opened, the washrooms located at the Parks Storage Building will be available.
6 & 7	Mountain Drive Park (new build in 2022-2023)	Portable Toilets will be available until new facility is built.
13	Strabane Community Park	Portable Toilets will be available. (Winterization of facility was not feasible).
12	Ancaster Little League Park / Lion's Outdoor Pool (Hemming Park)	Portable Toilets will be available at Lion's Outdoor Pool (Hemming Park)

At the completion of the winter washroom pilot in the spring of 2023 an update on the successes, challenges and costs will be presented to council along with the second year of public engagement responses.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Communication Update – Engage Hamilton, Engagement Results

Park Winter Washroom Pilot Project

Engagement Background

Council approved a two-year pilot program offering park washrooms in the fall and winter when they would otherwise be closed. Year one of the pilot has ended and we are required to conduct engagement to determine how residents feel about the program.

The public engagement served as:

- An opportunity to solicit feedback from residents on how they feel about the park winter washroom program;
- Solicit feedback on user's experience;
- Gauge whether the program is a value-added service for residents; and,
- See what was done well and what can be improved.

To advertise the Pilot Program Survey, staff put up Notices at washroom sites identifying opportunities to contact, including:

- Online "Engage Hamilton" option for input
- Contact phone number (Parks admin or Call Centre)
- Email
- Drop off comments at City Hall

Engagement activities were hosted on the Engage Hamilton, digital engagement platform.

Engagement Summary

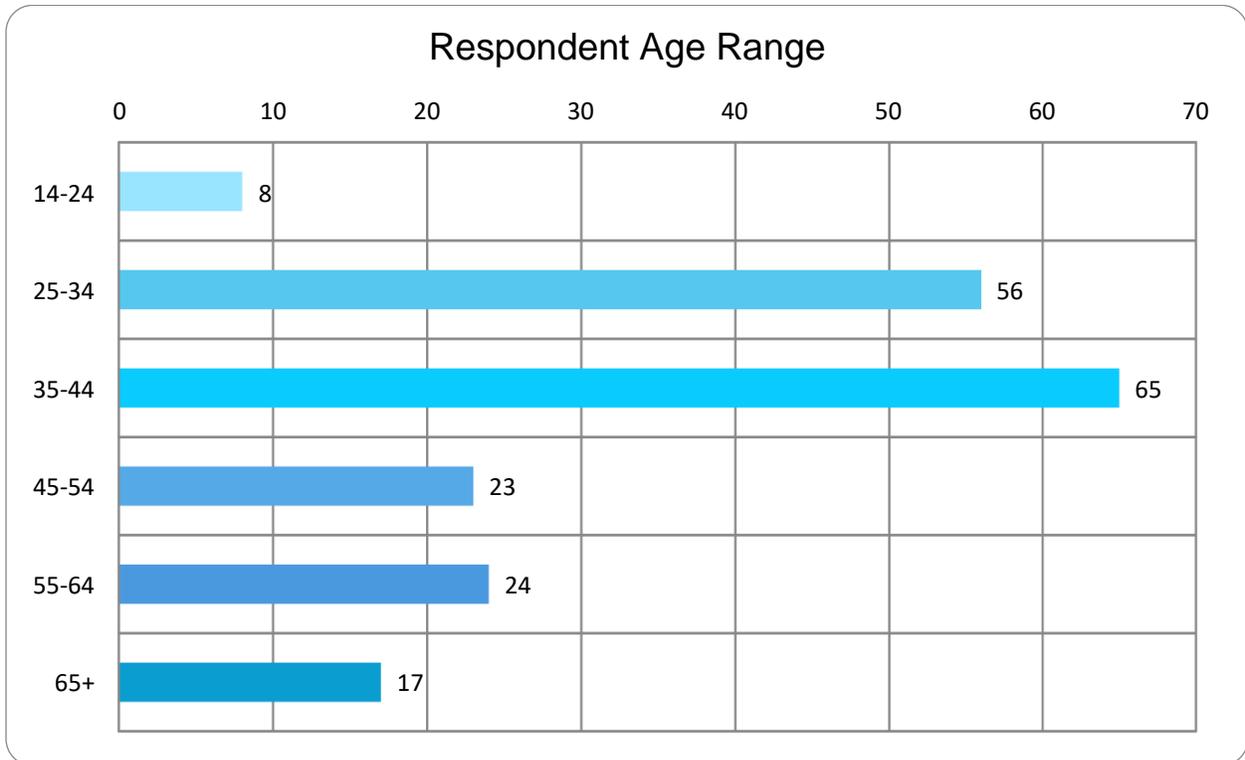
Engagement Activities Available:

- 1) Survey Tool
- 2) Forum Topics
- 3) Guest Book
- 4) Place Map
- 5) Comments received through Engage Hamilton, email and phone

Levels of Engagement:

Total Project Visitors	509
- Engaged visitors (contributed feedback)	198
- Informed visitors (clicked on additional information)	273
- Aware visitors (visited at least one page)	457

Survey Respondent details:



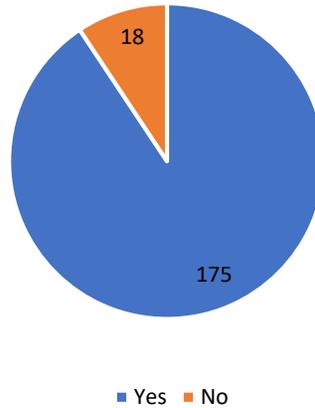
Did you know:

- 65% of respondents didn't know about the pilot program and of the 35% who knew about the pilot program, over half of respondents found out about the program by visiting a park where the washroom door was open. 73% of respondents who knew about the program were able to stay longer at the park.
- Most respondents (66%) visit a City of Hamilton Park daily and/or a few times a week and most respondents (76%) will spend between 31-60mins and/or more than 1 hour to less than 3 hours at a City of Hamilton Parks.

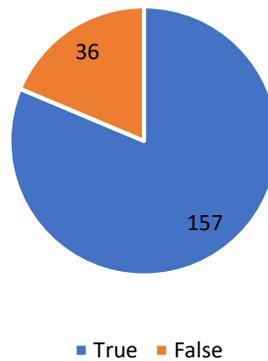
1) Survey Tool

Major themes reported by Survey Respondents are provided below:

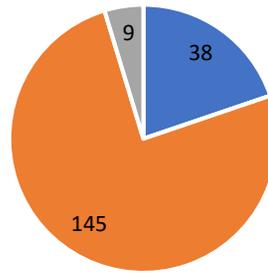
As a resident, does the Winter Washroom Program represent a value added service?



I would prefer to use a park washroom facility however I would use a portable toilet if a park washroom facility was not available.



Aside from park washroom facilities, public washrooms are available for use in nearby arenas, libraries, and recreation centres. Which statement is true for you:



- I would prefer to use a washroom in an arena, library, or recreation centre before using a park washroom during the fall/winter.
- I have no preference of which washroom I use during the fall/winter.
- I would prefer not to use a public washroom.

What were the top 5 washrooms used by respondents in the 2021/2022 Fall/Winter season?

Park Name	# of Respondents
Pier 4 Park (Gartshore Thomson Building)	22
Dundas Driving Park	19
Gage Park Washroom (by splash pad)	17
Gage Park Washroom (by baseball diamond)	16
I did not use any washroom during the Fall/Winter Season 2021/2022	16

Fall/winter washrooms were to be available for daylight use, opened and closed according to a scheduled route during the pilot program. The following observations were noted by survey respondents:

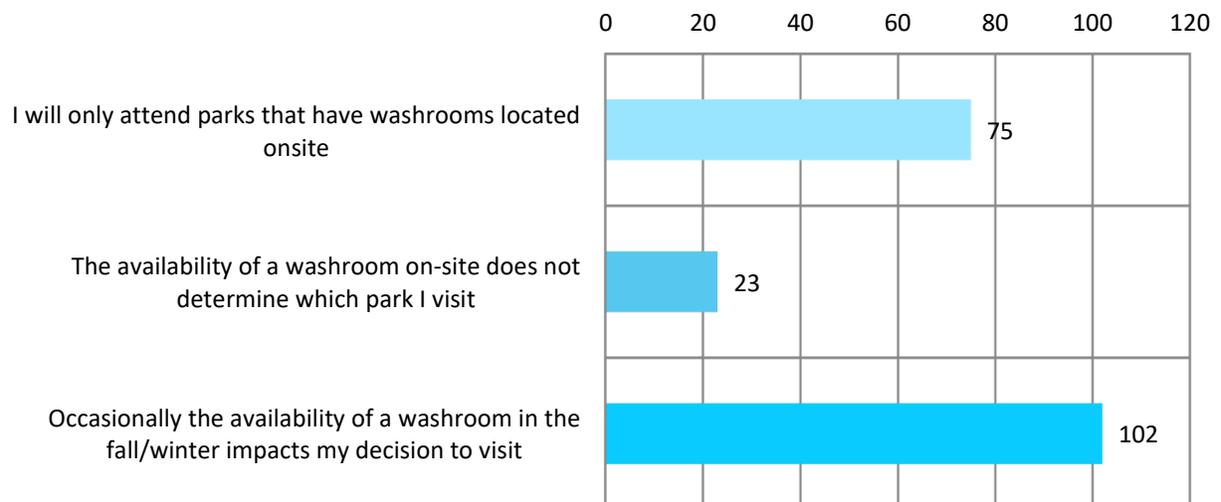
The washroom was open for use at the time I needed it	
True	108
False	85

Availability for daylight use is a sufficient level of service for me	
True	96
False	97

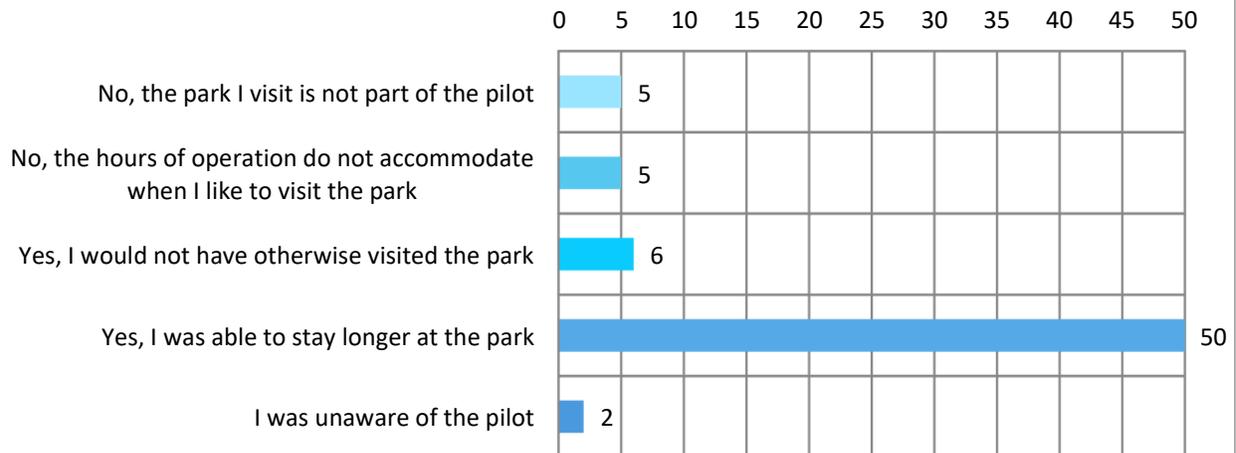
The hours of operation are not sufficient; washrooms should be available earlier in the morning	
True	101
False	91

The hours of operation are not sufficient; washrooms should be available later in the evening	
True	119
False	73

Does the availability of a park washroom impact your decision to visit a park in the fall/winter?



Did the availability of park washrooms through the pilot program make visiting a park more accessible for you?



2) Forum Topic 1:

Do you have concerns about the aesthetics of portable toilets at your City parks?

“Sort of, but not really. I mean a portable toilet is WAY better than no toilet, but I think every single park should have a plumbed public washroom facility. Little kids can’t ‘hold it’. Plus people in wheelchairs and with various accessibility needs require access that a portable toilet simply cannot provide.”

This comment received 1 agree

Forum Topic 2:

Why did you not use the park washrooms this fall/winter season?

“The pilot program was not well advertised and I was completely unaware of the pilot despite going to a park nearly every day. Also, in the winter the sun sets before many people are home from work so the daylight hour bit is totally useless, they need to be open past sunset so people who are in the park past 5 or 6pm in the winter can use them!”

This comment did not receive an agree/disagree

3) **Guest Book:**

Do you have any other comments about the Parks Winter Washroom 2021/2022 Pilot?

“1. Why do the washrooms ever need to be closed? is it because the city doesn't want people sleeping in them? The City of Hamilton out to be providing appropriate shelter for people who need it so they aren't forced to sleep in unsafe and dirty locations.

2. The winter pilot is kind of useless because the sun sets so early in the winter that the busiest time of day, after work, no one has access to a washroom.

3. Porta-potties are better than nothing, but they are not large enough to change diapers or bring in a stroller. Strollers are very easily and quickly stolen and can't be left unattended. Further porta-potties are not accessible for wheelchairs or really any accessibility need, including having a support attendant. Porta-potties are mildly better than peeing in a bush.”

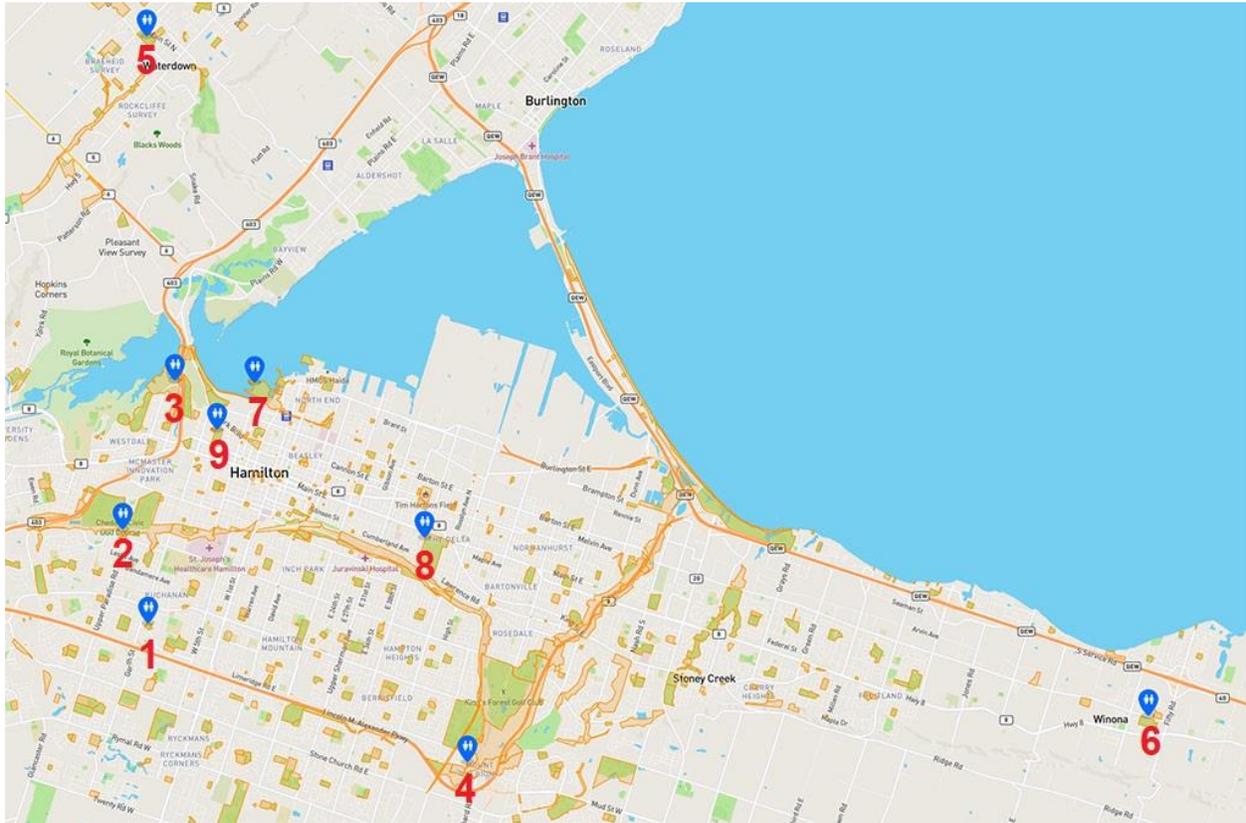
“Please open the washroom in the Dundas Driving Park. Many seniors use this park every day of the year....and ya we don't just pee May-Sept 😊. We encourage healthy living. Let's support that thought. In the specific case of dundas driving park, lets do something for our seniors. It is not a huge investment. Pouring salt on roads all winter seems acceptable spending?? Thanks.”

4) **Place Map:**

If Council chooses to make the Winter Washroom Program permanent, which park site would you like considered to be added?

Participants submitted the following sites (see map below):

1. Newlands Park: 137 Lynbrook Drive, Hamilton
2. Chedoke Golf Course and Stairs: 563 Aberdeen Ave, Hamilton
3. Princess Point Area: 335 Longwood Road North, Hamilton
4. Albion Falls Parking Lot: across the road from 750 Mountain Brow Blvd, Hamilton
5. Waterdown Memorial Park: 200 Hamilton St N, Waterdown
6. Winona Park: 1328 Barton Street, Stoney Creek
7. Bayfront Park (Beach Area): 200 Harbour Front Drive, Hamilton
8. Gage Park: 160 Gage Avenue South, Hamilton
9. Victoria Park: 100 Strathcona Ave N, Hamilton



NOTE: Newlands Park and Albion Falls Parking Lot are locations that did not participate as part of the pilot project, as neither site has portable or permanent washroom facilities.

Next Steps

The information gathered as part of the pilot project will be used to improve the second year of the pilot and to inform future park redevelopment plans where washroom building gaps are identified.

After the final year of the pilot project, Staff will report back to Council in the Summer of 2023 with the results of the two- year pilot program, including options and associated funding respecting winter washroom program feasibility.