



## Governance and Priorities Committee Report

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Date: *June 2, 2011*                      From: *Michael Hill, Downtown Coordinator*  
Subject: ***Downtown Public Toilet Facilities***

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### **Executive Summary**

On July 15, 2010, Council approved staff recommendations to:

- Continue operation of the pilot permanent urinal site;
- Determine two additional sites for installation; and
- Develop options for providing enhanced washroom access for women and public use generally.

Four sites have been identified as possible locations for two additional public urinals. Of these sites, the 1200 block of Langley Street site is considered to present the best location in terms of demand, acceptability by adjacent property owners and cost for installation. Available funding allows for the installation of facilities at one site at this time.

Towards determining options for enhanced public access to washrooms, staff worked with the urinal designer (Matthew Soules) to develop a prototype combination toilet/urinal facility utilizing a similar look to the urinal. During this time, staff also became aware of a toilet facility that the City of Portland has developed for a similar application and has made available for purchase. Due to its availability and proven performance, it is proposed that a Portland facility be installed at the Langley Street location on a trial basis. If successful, continued development of a grid of urinals and toilets through the downtown area should be considered for the future.

### **Recommendation:**

That Council:

1. Approve installation of the purchase and installation of a Portland toilet facility on the 1200 block of Langley Street on a trial basis.

Respectfully submitted

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Michael Hill  
Downtown Coordinator  
Engineering & Public Works

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Dwayne Kalynchuk, P. Eng.  
Director of Engineering &  
Public Works

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Peter Sparanese, P. Eng  
General Manager of Operations

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Gail Stephens

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present Council with prospective locations for new public urinals and to propose options for wider public access to toilet facilities in the downtown, as requested by Council in July 2010.

## Background

The need for greater access to public washrooms was identified in 2005 and a report outlining conditions in the downtown was presented to Council in 2006. Misuse of toilet facilities by the street community has resulted in private providers of washrooms being more restrictive in their approach to allowing public access. Semi-private facilities, such as at the Bay Centre and below the Visitors Centre (PCC) provide service, however hours are restricted and their locations are not always clear to visitors.

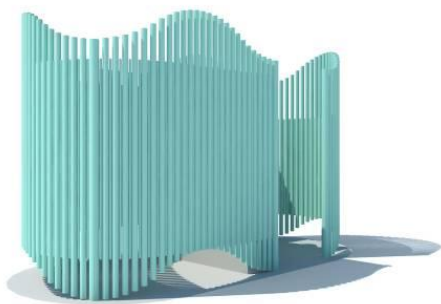
In June 2009, Council directed staff to construct and deploy a freestanding urinal on a trial basis. The urinal was successful in providing a clean, safe and aesthetically pleasing facility which helped address late night public urination issues.

Feedback on the pilot indicated that the public understood that the problem related primarily to males, though comments were received indicating the need for greater access for females and the public generally. Female access requires consideration for **safety** and **functionality**. Staff were concerned that the addition of a security gate for female use may render the urinal vulnerable to social misuse. In terms of the urinal's functionality for females, staff were also concerned that if the urinal were to be reconfigured for females the changes would result in misuse, cleanliness and vandalism issues. Viable alternative options were to be sought.

## Issues & Analysis

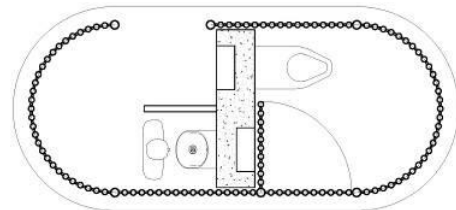
### Female Access and Broader Toilet Availability

Options such as security gates and "pee-mates" would facilitate the use of freestanding urinals by females in urgent need, especially late in the evening when there are fewer washroom options. However, this is not expected to fully address female need, nor that of the broad public who require more comprehensive washroom services.



The freestanding urinal has been successful in terms of presentation, safety and cleanliness. It also has a high degree of visibility on the street for prospective users.

The same approach was therefore considered



appropriate for application towards a more complete facility. A **combined urinal and toilet** would offer unrestricted access to the facility for both genders (see adjacent images). The toilet section may also be closed during certain hours of the night if concerns with safety and security were to arise.

The architect of the urinal developed a preliminary design for a possible facility. The toilet section door would reside in the open position until it is closed by the user. Supplies and services would be kept minimal to reduce the likelihood of vandalism and misuse.

Aesthetic values of the toilet design are similar to the existing urinal while the targeted levels for cleanliness and safety would be the same. Based on the success of the urinal, a combination facility is likely to function well and provide a valuable option for broadening washroom availability in the downtown.

While investigating the design of the combination facility, staff became aware that the City of Portland has developed its own “Portland Loo”, for similar application (see Attachment 1). It has been successfully deployed for over two years in a location subject to social issues. Based on this success, three more of the toilets were installed at the end of 2010. The absence of problems has been attributed to its design features, which parallel those reflected in Victoria’s urinal and the proposed public toilet design. The facility is very basic and has an open feel due to the louvers at the tops and bottoms of side panels.



<b>Portland Loo</b>	<b>Victoria Combination</b>
Pro: Design is complete and its ready to go	Con: Design needs completion (e.g. roof)
Pro: Proven performance	Con: No field tests
Pro: Offers a wash station outside	Con: No wash station at this point in time
Pro: Solar powered electrical system	Pro: Built by the City of Victoria as a City achievement; an inspiration to others in the community
Con: Off the shelf	Pro: Aesthetic is very high and likely to be celebrated
Con: The aesthetic is utilitarian, which may affect the range of suitable locations	Pro: Provides separate toilet and urinal facilities
Con: Does not offer a urinal	

Comparing the two options for a toilet facility, the Victoria design offers a higher aesthetic and both a urinal and toilet facility. The Portland toilet offers a proven track record and no further development work is required.

### Costs

Funds currently allocated for the toilet facilities are \$164,000. Based on costs for the existing urinal, estimated cost for fabrication of additional units is \$55,000 each.

The cost to bring the combination toilet/urinal design to completion is \$16,000. This had been added to its cost in the table below, though this would be a one-time expense. Fabrication and installation costs are expected to be higher than the urinal by a factor of 1.5, suggesting a cost of \$82,500.

The cost for The City of Portland is offering the toilet for sale for \$90,000 USD per unit pre-assembled plus delivery costs, duty and etcetera (est. 10%). Selecting the Portland Loo would

	<b>Site</b>	<b>Rec'd</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Urinal</b>	<b>Combin.</b>	<b>Portland</b>
1	1200 Block Langley	Yes	Close to Bastion Square and bars	\$80,000	\$126,000	<u>\$124,000</u>
2	SE Corner Yates at Douglas	Alt	Close to buses, taxi stand, no adjacency	\$75,000	\$120,000	\$118,000
3	SE Corner Fort at Douglas	Alt	Near buses & taxi stand, but bus stop very close	\$68,000	\$114,000	\$112,000
4	SW Corner Fort at Douglas	Alt	Good location, but high installation cost	\$107,000	\$153,000	\$151,000

**Total Cost for Recommended Facilities and Sites within Existing Budget: \$124,000**

require that the purchase be a single source as no other suppliers are known to provide a product with the same attributes.

Underground services and street surface adjustment costs will vary with specific location and are similar for any of the options. Operational costs would be similar to the existing urinal for cleaning and maintaining hardware.

### Locations

Locations were evaluated based on their proximity to and travel corridors between late night liquor establishments, bus stops and late night taxi stands. Compatibility with adjacent property uses (e.g. restaurants, hotels) and cost variations for installation were also considered. Attachment 2 shows proposed and possible future locations of facilities.

Four sites were identified as meeting identified criteria. Of these sites, two locations were identified as preferred locations: mid-block on the 1200 block of Langley Street at Bastion Lane; and the southeast corner of Yates Street at Douglas Street. Attachment 3 illustrates the conditions at each site.

1. 1200 Langley Street Mid-block. The Bastion Square area is host to a concentration of ten bars and restaurants with over 2,000 licensed seats catering to the late night economy. Public urination here is a recognized problem. The proposed location is central to the square and one of very few sites on public property where there is adequate space for reasonable separation from other public and private uses. A reconfiguration of the curb is required for installation.

2. Southeast Corner of Yates at Douglas. This location has a broad sidewalk with no active business frontage immediately adjacent to the proposed site. The nearby street is a busy pedestrian area late at night and a urinal would serve the two late night taxi stands and late night bus service which are located on adjacent corners of the intersection.

An alternative to this location would be at the northwest (kitty) corner of the Yates and Douglas intersection; however this is very close to the entrance of a busy convenience store.

3. Southeast Corner of Fort at Douglas. This site is one of few possible locations in this area and is an alternative to the above two locations. It serves a late night taxi stand, bus stops and over 2,000 nearby liquor licensed seats with 1:00am or later closing times. One reservation is that the corner has a very high number of persons waiting for buses and the urinal may be found offensive in such close proximity.

4. Southwest Corner of Fort at Douglas. An alternative to this location would be west across Douglas Street. Although it is a more comfortable distance from waiting bus passengers, the costs for underground service connection are high. It also requires an extension to the curb and removal of one parking spot.

Other locations were also considered. An alternative to the Langley Street site is further north on Langley at Yates Street. However, the location is further from the centre of the square and is closer to residential units under development on the north side of Yates Street.

The southwest corner of Broad and Yates Streets is central and preferred from an underground services perspective, but the location would be very close to one or both of other recommended sites and therefore result in poor facility distribution.

On the northwest corner of View and Broad, there are wide sidewalks and active late night pedestrian activity. Business adjacency distances are reasonable, however, there are several storeys of the building immediately adjacent to the site that would look down into the urinal and

require screening. A urinal at this location would be central, but would also be too close to other prospective locations for good distribution.

The grass boulevard at the foot of Johnson at Store Street is separated from businesses and in a late night corridor between popular late night establishments and is a good location. However, it may be affected by a reconfiguration of the approach to the new Johnson Street Bridge and is therefore best considered during that project.

## **Conclusions**

While deploying two more of the well-received public urinals was intended, examination of the possibility for a successful full service facility has proved promising. Portland's success with its toilet and the availability of several design options suggest that a more complete solution for downtown washrooms is possible. To evaluate a pilot in the downtown, one of the two toilet facility designs could be deployed in place of one of the planned new urinals.

The Portland Loo offers a facility that can be purchased and installed in 2-3 months, whereas the Victoria design is likely to require 3-4 months. Its performance is proven and no further development work needs to be completed.

It is therefore recommended that the Portland toilet be purchased and deployed on a trial basis. Both the Langley and Yates Streets sites recommended above would be suitable for the toilet. As there have been requests from the Bastion Square market operators for facilities to serve market patrons, this site is preferred for the trial installation of the toilet.

Although deployment of more facilities (including urinals) would be desirable, allocated funding is sufficient for the installation of one unit at this time.

If successful, the toilet may be considered for other locations in the downtown. It is estimated that a total of eight urinals and combination facilities would serve the Old Town and Legislative areas of the downtown. The option exists for these facilities to be sponsored by semi-public landowners such as BC Legislature, the Provincial Capital Commission or the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority.

## **Recommendations**

That Council:

1. Approve installation of the purchase and installation of a Portland toilet facility on the 1200 block of Langley Street on a trial basis.

# Attachment 1. Portland Toilet Facility



Two successful years in a neighbourhood with street issues



Easily serviced and available parts



Overflow drainage to sewer

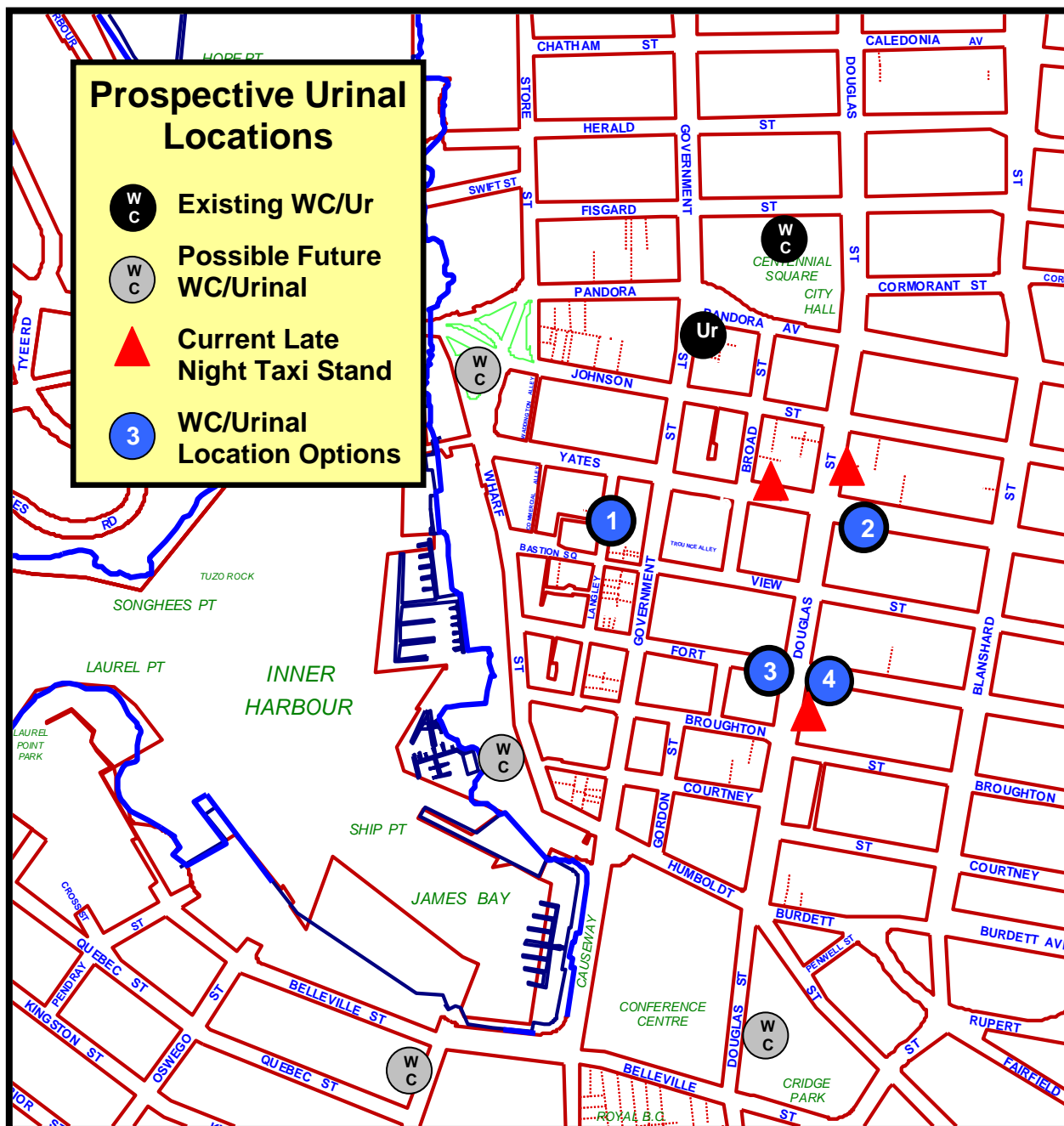


Exterior handwash station



Simple Interior to encourage appropriate use

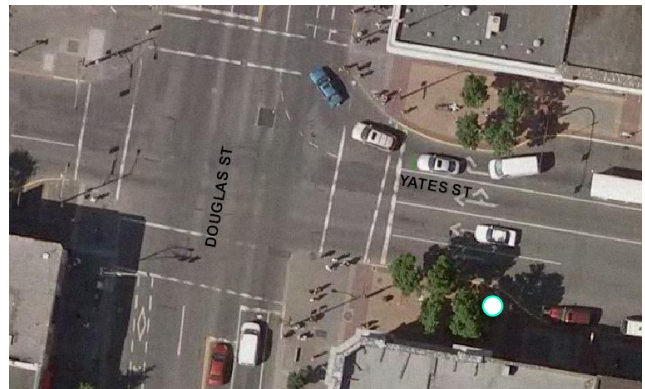
## Attachment 2. Map of Prospective Locations



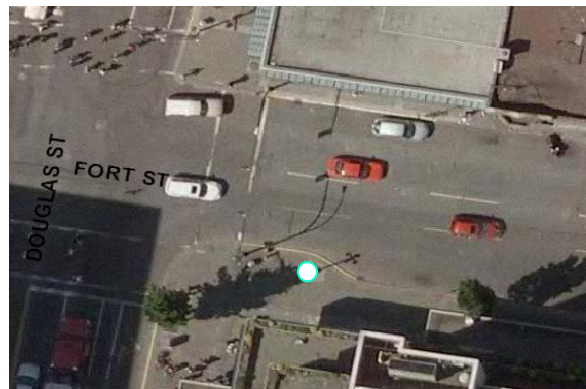
### Attachment 3. Site Conditions



#### 1. Recommended: 1200 Block Langley Street



#### 2. Alternate: SE Corner - Yates at Douglas



#### 3. Alternate: SE Corner - Fort at Douglas



