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## Grand Bend is getting more outdoor public toilets, but will 2 be enough?

The Lake Huron beach town gets jammed on busy weekends like July 1

[Andrew Lupton](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jun 30, 2023 4:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: June 30



A town of about 3,000 people, Grand Bend can draw up to 10,000 visitors to the town on summer weekends. (Andrew Lupton/CBC)

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When summer comes to Grand Bend, Ont., so do the crowds.

Drawn to the sandy beaches, the cool blue waters of Lake Huron and stunning sunsets, the town of a few thousand can become choked with traffic on summer weekends, and this July 1 weekend will be no different.

"You better get here early to get parking," said Nathan Ross, whose family has been serving shakes and hot dogs at the Dairy Dip restaurant since 1960.

And while Ross and other business owners who spoke to CBC News say the summer crowds are their livelihood, there is one issue generated by all that traffic the town is trying to fix: There aren't enough bathrooms.

There are public bathrooms on the beach and on Main Street near the OPP station, but business owners say they often become dirty and have long lines on busy days.



Dairy Dip owner Nathan Ross recommends anyone planning a summer weekend trip to Grand Bend plan to arrive early. (Andrew Lupton/CBC News)

When that happens, business owners become inundated with requests to use the bathroom. Most businesses have policies that restrict bathroom use to their customers.

Ross says while he tries to help non-customers in need of the facilities, it's not always possible.

"It becomes so busy, you just can't do it," he said. "If we let everyone use our bathrooms, they'd be lined up to the street and paying customers wouldn't be able to use our bathrooms and that's not fair. People coming off the street, they need somewhere to go."



Made by Quebec company, Urben Blu, two of these self-cleaning bathrooms have been ordered by the municipality of Lambton Shores for use near Grand Bend beach. (Urban )

To ease the pressure on businesses, the town has ordered two, high-tech, self-cleaning public toilets. Available year-round and accessible for all users, the toilets enclosed in permanent stalls will cost the town \$320,000, with an all-in installed cost of \$450,000, according to a staff report that came before Lambton Shores council in March.

Built by Quebec company Urben Blu, the washrooms units will have heated floors and are also billed as being resistant to graffiti and other vandalism.

Lambton Shores Mayor Doug Cook said the toilets are needed to ease pressure on demand for business owners' bathrooms. Also, the self-cleaning toilet stalls can operate in the winter months and at other times businesses and other public toilets are closed.

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Tourist visits to Grand Bend Beach have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. (Andrew Lupton/CBC)

"We've seen an increase in our tourist traffic in the last few years," said Cook. "Especially since COVID hit, we've become a lot more of a destination. It's put a lot more pressure on our facilities that we have."

Cook said between 5,000 and 10,000 people typically come to the town to view Canada Day fireworks. Sometimes traffic into the town from the south is backed up as far as the Pinery Provincial Park, 10 kilometres away.

The new toilets have been ordered but not yet delivered. Lambton Shores council is working on exactly where they'll locate them. Cook said they're limited by space and access to water and electrical service.



Business owners say these public bathrooms off Main Street near the OPP detachment aren't always easy for visitors to find. (Andrew Lupton/CBC)

"I was hoping to have them for the weekend but obviously that's not going to happen," said Cook.

Ross said the self-cleaning washrooms sound like a good idea. His only worry is that two new units won't fill the need.

"I'm thinking they may need to upgrade that number a bit," he said.



Businesses often get inundated with requests from non-customers to use their bathrooms when the beach gets busy. (Andrew Lupton/CBC)

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