

New Brunswick

Moncton adding public washroom outside city hall sought by businesses

Downtown association says businesses faced issues with people damaging washrooms

Shane Magee · CBC News · Posted: Aug 05, 2021 6:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: August 5, 2021



Water and sewer lines for a new public washroom were installed in front of Moncton city hall on Wednesday. (Shane Magee/CBC)

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When you have to go, you have to go. But where do you go if there's nowhere open to go?

On Wednesday, Moncton took a step toward resolving the question. Main Street in front of city hall was closed to traffic so water and sewer lines could be installed to service a new washroom in the plaza near bus shelters. It will remain closed through Thursday to complete the work.

Moncton is adding a new public washroom to the plaza outside city hall after years of requests for more public facilities, including by downtown businesses that have dealt with damaged bathrooms.

Austin Henderson, a spokesperson for the City of Moncton, said the accessible, single-toilet washroom is meant to be self-cleaning. There are mechanisms that will clean the toilet and walls with disinfectant on a regular basis, he said.

It will be regularly checked by city staff in part to ensure it remains stocked with things like soap and toilet paper.

"In the downtown core, especially in a COVID setting, the importance of publicly available washrooms is critical and something we hear from downtown businesses and from organizations regularly," Henderson said.



A rendering of what a new public washroom outside city hall in Moncton should look like once complete. (City of Moncton/Submitted)

Anne Poirier Basque is the executive director of Downtown Moncton Centre-ville Inc., a group that represents businesses in the city core.

The group has advocated new public facilities for years because downtown businesses have had problems with homeless people or drug use in their washrooms.

"The businesses were incurring issues such as bathrooms being used for sleeping quarters, as washing facilities, feces were spread sometimes on their bathroom walls, and they're having to replace toilets due to needles being flushed," Poirier Basque said.

Some washrooms, such as those in the Starbucks before it closed, had locks on bathroom doors that required a code from staff to open.

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Brass bathroom drain covers were stolen several years ago from the Peace Centre building that's occupied by several non-profits that work with people in need. Property damage has led some businesses to hire security.

"It's definitely the hope that it would ease the pressure on businesses because the request is often on them to use their facilities," Henderson said, adding that the washroom will also be used when there are downtown events and to address concerns that arose during the pandemic.



The washroom will be installed near the bus shelters in front of city hall. (Shane Magee/CBC)

During the early days of the pandemic a number of businesses closed entirely to the public. Poirier Basque said this led to people urinating in parking lots and in front of businesses.

"There was a severe lack of publicly available washrooms in the downtown," Henderson said. "So that's another reason that we're taking this step for this structure specifically."

Henderson said a similar washroom may be added at the other end of downtown near the Avenir Centre.

The city is spending \$300,000 on the project, with \$200,000 of it paid by the federal government through a COVID-19 recovery program.

The washroom is expected to open by the end of the month.

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