

At last, a public washroom in downtown Kenora



[Mike Stimpson, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter](#)

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A public washroom is installed in downtown Kenora in December 2023. | Facebook/City of Kenora

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KENORA – A public washroom may not be a glamorous project, but it sure is a good development for the unhoused, and indeed “anyone who needs to use a washroom,” says an advocate for the homeless.

The City of Kenora announced the installation of a colourful self-cleaning public washroom this week in its downtown core.

“It was a long time coming, and we’re quite happy to see that it’s finally here,” said Marlene Elder, a member of Kenora Moving Forward, a non-profit group that assists unhoused people in the city’s downtown area.

“It’s acknowledging that there was a gap, that there was a need for this,” she said Thursday. “And so we’re hoping it’s the start of more proactive projects by the city.”

Kenora city council approved construction of a self-cleaning standalone restroom at the corner of First Street South and Chipman Street in November 2021. The structure, which has self-cleaning toilets inside, was commissioned in 2022.

The facility was manufactured by Quebec-headquartered Urben Blu, which according to its website specializes in “smart, self-cleaning and vandal-proof public restrooms.”

Winnipeg-based artist Cash Akoza, whose murals have graced a few prominent sites in the Manitoba capital, created mural panels for each side of the structure.

A public washroom “has been an identified need for our downtown community for a long time,” said Coun. Graham Chaze, who operates a business in the city’s downtown.

Total cost of this new public facility is about \$450,000, according to Kenora corporate services director Heather Pihulak.

The Kenora District Services Board and the Harbourtown BIZ contributed to funding the project.

An official grand opening ceremony is set for Tuesday, Dec. 19, at noon.