

Mayor Guthrie and Members of Council:

Public washrooms are an essential service, especially in a pandemic. Proper hand hygiene is the number one recommendation to avoid infection and washing with soap and water is considered superior to hand sanitizer.

Moreover, access to clean water and sanitation is a human right, declared by the United Nations:

<https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/human-rights/>

People are rights-holders and States are duty-bearers of providing water and sanitation services. Rights-holders can claim their rights and duty-bearers must guarantee the rights to water and sanitation equally and without discrimination.

The City of Guelph needs to open all public washroom facilities without delay, including all park washrooms, the pavilion in Market Square and City Hall washrooms.

Toronto has been proactive in opening additional washroom services across its metropolitan area:

"The ability to practice proper hygiene, including handwashing, is vital to stopping the spread of COVID-19," reads [a statement from city councillor Joe Cressy](#).

"Due to the closure of community and drop-in spaces, some of our most vulnerable, including those experiencing homelessness, now have limited access to washrooms and handwashing facilities."

For this reason, the city has opened sanitation and washroom service locations across the city to provide access to showers, washrooms and drinking water during the pandemic.

Street-involved people are those left shouldering the indignity and risks of lack of access to washrooms and drinking water.

Our parks have never been busier, and there is no where to go to the bathroom. Private establishments such as restaurants and cafes, which often allowed some public access, have been closed.

I was profoundly dismayed at the failure of the City to provide any washroom access whatsoever for the 5,000 people who gathered in Market Square on June 6th. With cafes closed and only curbside pickup from restaurants, there was literally "nowhere to go."

Limited availability has not been a pretext for zero service when it comes to other essential services. Transit did not grind to a halt because only 10 people were allowed per bus. Limited

healthcare services have not meant zero healthcare services. Limited shopper capacity in grocery stores did not mean they closed.

If the LCBO can figure out how to organize orderly access and sanitation protocols for me to purchase alcohol, the City can do the same for washroom access.

Risk of COVID-19 transmission in a washroom can be managed just as it can be managed on the handle of a grocery cart:

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/06/02/how-to-stay-safe-from-covid-19-while-using-a-public-washroom.html>

Even epidemiologists are urging that public washrooms be opened:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/public-washrooms-ottawa-pandemic-1.5588475>

*"We're balancing here the risk of [COVID-19] transmission versus the risk of people not having access to the bathroom. And that second risk is a real risk," said Deonandan, an associate professor at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Health Sciences.*

Washrooms have been opened in Ottawa parks for several weeks now:

<https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/ottawa-opening-public-washrooms-at-five-beaches-public-parks-1.4967609#:~:text=OTTAWA%20%2D%2D%20Public%20washrooms%20are,will%20also%20be%20turned%20on.>

In the City News section of the current edition of the Mercury-Tribune, under the heading, "**Parks and Sports Fields**", it says the following: *"We reduced staff to reduce costs while responding to COVID-19."*

Grass cutting is one thing - public washrooms are another. Council needs to take a vote to recall staff so this essential service can be restored for citizens. Staff need to be held accountable to a date for water and sanitation services to be available to all Guelph citizens, not just in their own homes, but in public places across the City.

Sincerely,  
Susan Watson