



Cities Centre
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

**A Comparative Policy
Analysis of Public Toilet
Provision Initiatives in North
American Cities:
Recommendations for the
Creation of a Public Toilet
Strategy in Toronto**
Rhonda Cheryl Solomon

Research Paper 225

Cities Centre, University of Toronto

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Executive Summary

If you want to understand a culture, look to its lavatories. (cited in Beard, 2013, n.p.)

This study investigates the provision of public toilets in seven North American cities (Toronto, ON; Calgary, AB; Portland, OR; Seattle, WA; Vancouver, BC; Edmonton, AB; and Denver, CO) in order to understand the factors that support or hinder public toilet provision and to develop recommendations for the creation of a public toilet strategy in Toronto. Public toilets are essential components in creating sustainable, accessible, and inclusive cities (Greed, 2006). Yet, research indicates that cities throughout North America suffer from not only a lack of public toilets, but also the closure of public toilets due to operating costs, vandalism, and misuse. The development of a public toilet strategy that incorporates feedback from collaborative planning exercises is critical to the establishment of an effective and sustainable public toilet program.

Data for this study was gathered through a literature and policy review, site visits and field observation, as well as ten face-to-face or telephone interviews with: current and former city representatives in Toronto, Calgary, Seattle, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Denver; a community activist in Portland, Oregon; and the owner of a facilities management company in Atlanta. Research revealed that, in general, cities provide public toilets to appease business owners weary of requests by non-patrons for use of their restroom facilities and to curb public excretion, which is seen as a quality of life issue for residents and business owners. Because the financial cost of providing public toilets is high, and plans to install public toilets often elicit concern from the community and from local businesses that the public toilets will act as a magnet for undesirable activity in the neighbourhood, public toilet provision can be a politically risky maneuver. In view of the potential for public criticism of elected officials who invest in public toilets, the need for advocacy—both from citizens and city officials—is indispensable.

Findings from this research indicate that establishing a suitable location for a public toilet is the primary challenge of public toilet provision. One of the greatest sources of tension regarding public toilet provision is the conflict between the aspiration to provide public toilets for a range of users and the reality that public toilets often are used by particular groups of people, for example, people with substance abuse issues and people who use the toilets for sexual activity, in such a way that renders the public toilets seemingly unusable by many. Yet, how do you best serve the restroom needs of all people—those for whom entry to the city means having access to adequate and well-designed public toilets, and those who can manage with a neighbourhood Starbucks? This study confirmed that a public toilet strategy that evolves out of the collaborative planning process is an important way to address the enduring conflicts that have haunted public toilets since their appearance in the city over a century ago. However, because there are a number of challenges to public toilet provision, it is crucial that city representatives are prepared to re-evaluate and modify the strategy over time. Consequently, evaluation criteria, which support the formation of short- and long-term public toilet objectives, must be a central component of a public toilet strategy. The recommendations of this study are that Toronto develops a public toilet strategy; collaborates with other cities that have drafted a public toilet strategy; assumes responsibility for the funding of public toilets; and examines alternative avenues of public toilet provision, such as Community Toilet Schemes and social enterprise.

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Rhonda Cheryl Solomon, Toronto, ON

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1.0 Introduction

Public toilets are essential components in creating sustainable, accessible, and inclusive cities (Greed, 2006). Because public toilet provision fundamentally concerns people’s mobility—how and whether people move through space—the provision of public toilets is, in essence, an issue about equitable access to a public resource. The development of a public toilet strategy for the integration of public toilets into Toronto’s built environment would enhance public toilet provision in Toronto, and, by enabling all people to participate in urban life, create a healthier and more liveable city.

Table 1 lists key elements of public toilet provision initiatives in Calgary, Denver, Edmonton, Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver. These elements are integral to the sustainability of a public toilet provision initiative because they embed public toilet provision within an inclusive and integrated urban system. As well, they provide a context with which to assess the state of public toilet provision in Toronto.

Table 1: Key Elements of Public Toilet Provision Initiatives in Selected North American Cities

City	Key Elements
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centre City Plan captures need for public toilets• City of Calgary council directive—Administration develop a comprehensive plan for the provision of public toilets• Produced report “Public Toilets in the Centre City”• Worked in cooperation with the BRZ, CPTED, Council key services, bylaw officers
Denver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restroom Master Plan interfaced with plans for other government departments• Public outreach
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public consultation• Looked at planning, managing, and policing holistically• Considered best practices from other jurisdictions
Portland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public outreach• Restroom implementation team—including members of social service agencies; PHLUSH; Portland Parks; city government agencies• Grassroots support
Seattle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consulted with community, neighbourhood, and business groups• Attended/convened public meetings to establish consensus
Vancouver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identified need for more public toilets downtown (tourists, shoppers, entertainment district)

1.1 Problem and Relevance

Public toilet provision constitutes the “vital, missing link that would enable the creation of sustainable, accessible, and inclusive cities” (Greed, 2006, p.128). By making it possible for all individuals, regardless of their social location—including their gender, sexuality, level of income, and degree of able-bodiedness—to access the city, public toilets create a livelier and more liveable city. Yet, because of competing visions and values regarding the provision of public toilets—pragmatic and public health concerns on one hand and social anxieties on the other—Toronto grapples with trying to accommodate what it perceives as the conflicting demands of public toilet availability and public safety.

This conflict between public toilet availability and public safety has produced a chronic inadequacy of public toilets in cities across North America. Indeed, cities throughout North America suffer from not only a lack of public toilets, but also the closure of public toilets due to operating costs, vandalism, and misuse—drug use and sexual activity being the behaviours most frequently cited as ‘undesirable’ (Frazier, 2011; Maag, 2008).

Not only does the provision of public toilets (or lack thereof) have important implications for public health and safety, as articulated through urban policy and design, but it also addresses critical equity, economic, and quality of life issues as well. For example, adequate and well-designed public toilets increase access to the city for women with children and people with disabilities (DCLG, 2008), guard against health complications (Anthony and Dufresne, 2007), and encourage tourism and promote economic growth (Greed, 2006). Alternatively, lack of public toilet provision, particularly public toilets that feature inclusive design elements such as unisex stalls, impacts a city’s reputation as a tourist destination, and creates unique challenges for women, transgender people, people with disabilities, older persons, and homeless people. For instance, women and transgender people frequently experience safety concerns when only binary sex toilets are available (Molotch, 2010), without access to accessible and adequate public toilets, older people and people with disabilities often are held captive at home (Logan, 2012), and homeless people often are forced to relieve themselves in the open (Harris, 2011). In view of these many concerns, it is imperative that Toronto’s administrators appreciate and underscore the critical role public toilets can play in creating a liveable city.

1.2 Background of the Study

In September 2006 (updated July 2010), Toronto City Planning, Clean and Beautiful City Secretariat, and Transportation Services authored a joint report entitled “Vibrant Streets: Toronto’s Coordinated Street Furniture Program.” The aim of this program is “to harmonize the design, form, scale, materials, and placement of street furniture so that it contributes to the accessibility, safety, and beauty of our public spaces” (p.1). The street furniture, including transit shelters, benches, and recycling bins, as well as up to 20 Automated Public Toilets (APTs), will be supplied by Astral Media as per the terms of a \$1 billion, 20-year contract with the City of Toronto. The city will receive revenue of \$428.8 million over 20 years from Astral (Lewington, 2009). While the “Vibrant Streets” program provides a context for the installation of public toilets on Toronto’s streets, no purposeful and comprehensive program exists to guide the conception and implementation of public toilet objectives in Toronto. By promoting the establishment of a goal and objectives for public toilet provision, as well as the articulation of vision and value statements, the development of a public toilet strategy would support the

improvement and enhancement of public toilet provision in Toronto. This assertion is supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government [UK] (2008) Strategic Guide “Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets.” This Guide is an example of Government working with a range of national and local stakeholders to argue for better public toilet provision, and contends that

sustainable Community Strategies set the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social, and environmental well-being of a local area. Sustainable community strategies, working alongside other policies, can provide an opportunity and a context within which local authorities can review public access to toilets across their area, and make linkages with their spatial planning policies, balancing the needs of urban and rural areas, land use and urban design priorities, the developments of town centres, shopping and leisure areas, links with strategic transport, and the demands of the 24 hour economy. (p.30)

Furthermore, the over-riding recommendation of the Communities and Local Government Committee [UK] 2008 report, “The Provision of Public Toilets,” is that

...the Government imposes a duty on each local authority to develop a strategy on the provision of public toilets in their areas, which should include consultation with the local community and which should be reviewed annually. The duty of compiling and reviewing a public toilet strategy is a simple requirement that will go a long way towards achieving the right of people who live in and visit this country to have accessible and clean public toilets, wherever they live, work, or visit. The way in which local authorities plan and utilize their own strategic plan is a decision for them; the fact that they have a plan should be a duty placed on them by the Government. (p.41)

The primary purpose of this research project is to produce recommendations for the creation of a public toilet strategy in Toronto. To develop relevant recommendations, it is imperative that a thorough analysis of public toilet provision initiatives in other large North American cities is conducted. This analysis offers perspective on the successes, challenges, and opportunities encountered by these cities in their efforts at public toilet provision. It is particularly important to examine how other cities address the conflict between practical and public health motivations for public toilet provision and the social tensions that arise subsequent to the installation of the toilets, for example, vandalism, drug use, and sexual activity occurring in the toilet units, because these social tensions often have led to the closure of the public toilets.

In its report “The Provision of Public Toilets,” the UK Communities and Local Government Committee (2008) explains that “our public toilet provision should not be allowed to decline at the current rate because of neglect arising from the lack of any clear strategy” (p.4). A public toilet strategy, which would include such questions as distribution of public toilet units, charging for use of the toilet units, public toilet maps and signage, and equality issues, is critical to the long-term sustainability of a public toilet provision effort. However, more fundamental to this effort is the implementation of a planning process. A planning process for public toilet provision would necessitate “collaborative community-based approaches to decision-making” (Greed,

2003, p.25). In collaborative planning, the stress is on participatory democracy—the participation of a range of stakeholders in the planning process. As Greed (2003) explains, this approach to planning is founded on “negotiation, networking, and liaison with community groups, rather than upon autocratic direction and coercion” (p.25). Authentic collaborative planning “requires accountability because ‘the planned’ are now to be seen as citizens, customers, clients, and stakeholders, rather than as the masses who have to be planned ‘for’ and placated” (Greed, 2003, p.26). Baroness Andrews, a British legislator, explains community empowerment in the context of public toilets: “...we think it is more effective if what is provided is locally determined and owned and sustainable and, therefore, a source of local pride” (cited in “The Provision of Public Toilets,” 2008, p.33).

Public toilet provision initiatives must be demand driven, with the local community included in assessment and decision-making processes. An effective public toilet strategy is an offshoot of the collaborative planning process, and incorporates feedback acquired from public consultation exercises such as community forums and public meetings, citizens’ panels, exhibitions, open days/houses, focus groups, in-depth interviews, and surveys (Region of Waterloo Public Health, n.d.). A public toilet strategy that evolves out of the collaborative planning process is an important way to put an end to the enduring conflicts that have haunted public toilets since their appearance in the city over a century ago.

2.0 Research Context

Because public toilet provision often is a thorny and fiercely contested issue, no city has found the magic potion that will promise success with a public toilet provision initiative. One common challenge to all cities is vandalism and misuse of public toilet facilities. Rather than discouraging or limiting access to public toilets as an antidote to vandalism and misuse, the question should focus on developing and implementing accessible, safe, and attractive solutions to address the toileting needs of all people.

2.1 Public Toilets in Toronto: Historical Context

The history of public toilets in the City of Toronto has been marked by perpetual conflict between practical concerns—preventing excretion on city streets, and hence controlling the spread of disease, and social concerns—shielding the city’s inhabitants from the spectacle of open excretion, and exterminating the spectre of homosexual encounters in the city’s public lavatories. This tension between practical and social concerns vis-à-vis public toilet provision led to the shut-down of many of Toronto’s public lavatory locations.

It is critical to examine the tension between practical and social concerns vis-à-vis public toilet provision that was present in Toronto at the turn of the twentieth century and that led to the closure of many of the city’s public toilets. Many of the problems plaguing public toilets today, for example, drug use and sexual encounters in the toilets, vandalism, and unsanitary conditions, are not appreciably dissimilar to the problems encountered in Toronto over a century ago. Moreover, like city officials over a century ago, many city officials today issue directives for the installation of public toilets without implementing a process of citizen consultation or a focussed public toilet strategy. As past experience has demonstrated, if not adequately addressed with a planning process that includes citizen consultation, providing public toilets will be a troubled and unsustainable endeavour.

The City of Toronto undertook a flurry of public lavatory building beginning in the late 1800s. Roughly one public lavatory per year was constructed during the first decade of the twentieth century in an attempt to regulate the “urinary behaviour of working class men” (Anderson, as cited in Cavanagh, 2010, p.236); records collected by city planners indicate that indiscriminate excretion by men was a common occurrence owing to insufficient toilet provision for the general public (Cavanagh, 2010). Indeed, in 1904 City Council remarked that public lavatories were “absolutely necessary for the sake of health and decency;” the sight of excreta on city streets

came to be associated with disease (the spread of which was meant to be reduced by public lavatories), contagion, and death (Cavanagh, 2010; Maynard, 1994, p.215). Thus, the city framed the need for public toilets as a matter of public health—as a means to prevent elimination on city streets, and hence control the spread of disease.

However, “there was a constant slippage within the language of the lavatory between issues of public health and issues of morality” (Maynard, 1994, p.215). Because many of the city’s residences lacked indoor plumbing, public lavatories were regarded by the public as basic necessities, yet more than offering residents a much needed public facility, public lavatories provided the city with a means to gauge the morals of its inhabitants. The city’s Committee on Parks heard frequent grievances from citizens “regarding the condition of the lavatories at Exhibition Park” and other locations. The city’s newspapers reported on the “Filthy Lavatories at Union Station,” describing the “stench” and “revolting” appearance of the facilities and appealing to health authorities to “remedy the evil” (cited in Maynard, 1994, p.215).

Perhaps for citizens of Toronto, however, the most alarming outcome of the growth of the city’s system of lavatories was that it increased the availability of public places men could meet for sex (Maynard, 1994). By the late 1930s, Toronto was in the grip of a “moral terror,” and the city had begun to close many of its public lavatory locations, citing upkeep and repair costs as the principal justification (City of Toronto Archives, 1948-1961; Cowen, Lehrer, & Winkler, 2005, p.195). From the 1940s onwards, members of the public in need of a lavatory were counselled by the city to avail themselves of the facilities provided by food service establishments and automobile service stations:

Service stations, in addition to the general public, cater to tourists, and it is felt that toilet accommodation should be provided for this section of the public... For your further information, I advise that public lavatories are provided at four locations throughout the City, but it has not been considered necessary to augment this service having regard for the fact that gasoline service stations provide such facilities. (City of Toronto Archives, 1948-1961)

2.2 Public Toilets in Toronto: Present-day Context

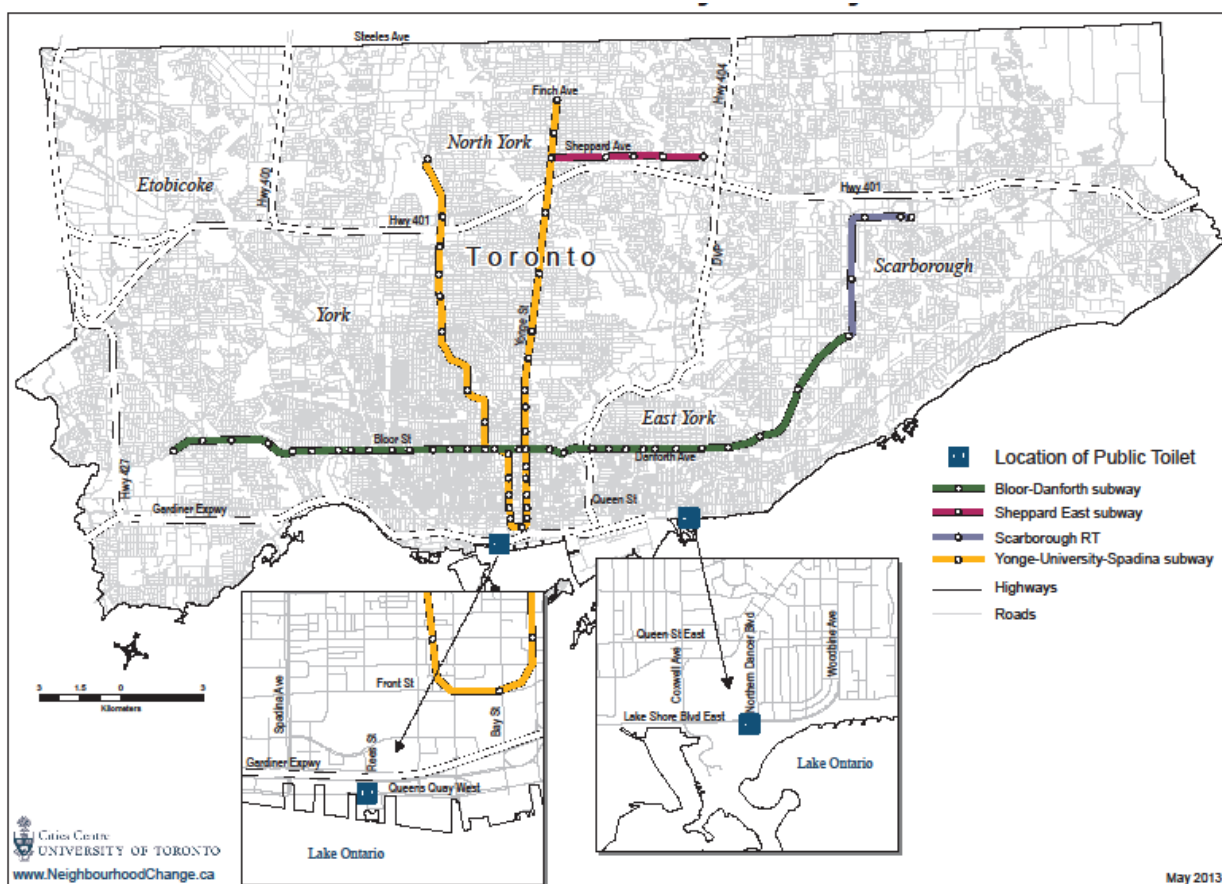
Because of competing visions and values regarding the nature of public toilets, providing public toilets in Toronto historically has been a troubled endeavour. This mismatch between visions and values is evident principally in the conflict between practical and social justifications for public toilet provision and restriction, which was present in Toronto during the early decades of the twentieth century, and was related to the need to contain the spread of disease while simultaneously controlling the spread of immoral behaviour. Conflict between visions and values surrounding public toilet availability in Toronto exists still today, and is related even now to a conflict between practical and social concerns. As Braverman (2010) puts it,

the high level of sensitivity around the placement of public toilets and the extended negotiations that have been taking place over each and every one of these facilities highlights the strong connections, at least those that exist in the mind of both government officials and local residents, between sanitary management and the control of unruly persons. (p.9, my emphasis)

In September 2006, The City of Toronto released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for its Co-ordinated Street Furniture Program. Included in the RFP was a “Rollout Schedule” for the city’s street furniture, including its Automated Public Toilets (APTs). Zero APTs were to be installed in 2008, one in 2009, and two each in the years 2010 to 2018, with one last APT to be installed in 2019, for a total of 20 APTs (City of Toronto, 2006). As of January 2013, Astral Media, the supplier of Toronto’s street furniture, has installed only two APTs, both over the last two years (2011 and 2012). APT locations in the City of Toronto are provided in Figure 1, below.

Toronto’s two APTs are located along the city’s waterfront, one in the city’s Harbourfront neighbourhood and the other in the Beach. Toronto’s waterfront primarily is a tourist destination. By locating its APTs only along the waterfront and excluding other areas of the city, Toronto’s APTs would appear to be provided as a means of enhancing the city’s image and appealing to visitors, and enhancing consumption of the waterfront.

Figure 1: Location of Public Toilets in Toronto



Source: Cities Centre, University of Toronto

The small number of new public toilets implemented makes it clear that more than one hundred years after the first public toilet was installed, Toronto still grapples with trying to accommodate what it perceives as the competing demands of public toilet availability and public safety. Because public toilet provision often is a thorny and fiercely contested issue, yet one with high stakes for many people, it is critical to examine not only whether, but how a program of public

toilet provision is implemented. How a public toilet program is implemented has a direct impact on who will have access to public toilets.

2.3 Resurgence of Public Toilets in the Developed World

Though far from ubiquitous, public toilets are easing gradually back into the North American urban landscape, and have been a fixture in a number of European and Australasian cities for a number of years. Public toilets most often are provided by cities as a means to prevent public urination and defecation on public and private property (Murphy, 2007), to placate owners of business establishments weary of requests from non-patrons for use of their toilet facilities (Rose, 2007), and to create hospitable city centres (Zielinski, 2012).

Toronto compares unfavourably with other cities, both in North America and elsewhere, in terms of its provision of public toilets and the relative degree of accessibility that residents experience with respect to public toilets. While the definition of what counts as a public toilet changes depending on context, Toronto clearly performs poorly in comparison with its international peers (Table 2).

Table 2: Population, Number of Public Toilets, and Ratio of Public Toilets to Population for Selected International Cities				
City	Country	Population	Number of Public Toilets	Ratio of Public Toilets to Population
Paris	France	2, 234, 105	495 Includes APTs as well as toilets in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks • Gardens 	1: 451
Sydney	Australia	169, 505	119 Includes eight APTs as well as toilets in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and public places • Train stations • Major shopping areas • Libraries 	1: 1,424
Melbourne	Australia	93, 625	59 Includes on street public toilets as well as toilets in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks • Gardens 	1: 1,587
Wellington	New Zealand	395, 600	65	1: 6,086
Edmonton	Canada	817, 498	88 Includes toilets in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries • Parks • Recreation facilities • LRT stations 	1: 9,290
London	England	8, 173, 194	759 Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APTs • Attended toilets • Community Toilets 	1: 10, 768
Christchurch	New Zealand	375, 900	16	1: 23, 494

San Francisco	United States	815, 358	25 Includes only APTs	1: 32, 614
Calgary	Canada	1,096, 833	29 Includes three APTs as well as toilets in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government buildings • Shopping centres • Medical facilities • Parks • Homeless shelters 	1: 37, 822
Vancouver	Canada	603, 502	8 Includes only APTs	1: 75, 438
Portland, OR	United States	583, 776	6 Includes only Portland Loos	1: 97, 296
Toronto	Canada	2, 625, 060	2 Includes only APTs	1: 1, 132, 530

While public toilets can produce more accessible and inclusive cities by making it possible for all individuals, regardless of their social location, to access the city, many academics express concern that cities increasingly are being defined by elites, such that “cities of the many are claimed by the few” (Massey, 2007, p.216). Miles (2012) expands upon this concern. He speaks of a desire on the part of “neoliberal elites” to “commodify” the city, “to create the conditions in which the city becomes an exciting place to live and visit and, above all, in which to consume” (p.217). Goldberger (1996) terms this consumer driven neo-liberal city a “private city,” and remarks on its capacity to promote “the energizing, stimulating immediacy of city life” at the same time as it shuts out the “less acceptable, unequal face of the city of poverty and crime” (p.27).

To the extent that the neoliberal city is a city formed by city boosters and reflects the visions of the elite, public toilets may be provided by a city as a means of enhancing its image and appealing to tourists and other consumers. As a result, this may directly influence how the public toilets are provided and to whom the public toilets are targeted. While urban inequality is a potential social problem produced by the neo-liberal city (Clarke, 2003), it can be argued that public toilet provision may produce a paradoxical shift whereby tourists and other consumers—the ideal ‘market’ as defined by the neo-liberal elite—potentially is usurped by non-consuming ‘undesirables’ who would appropriate the public toilets for their own use. By laying claim to the space of the public toilet, these individuals are asserting indirectly that the neo-liberal city is not inevitably a “private city” (Goldberger, 1996, p.27).

3.0 Public Toilets: A Review of the Literature

Most academic literature on the provision of public toilets addresses the following four themes: public toilet design, economic and environmental significance of toilet provision, and quality of life issues. Each of these themes, particularly public toilet design and quality of life issues, has very different impacts on different populations, with certain populations, for example, people with physical disabilities or mothers with children, experiencing lack of adequate toilet provision more acutely than others. Table 3 presents a summary of these themes and their impacts.

Table 3: Summary of Themes and Their Impacts

Theme	Impact
Public Toilet Design	Poorly designed and inadequately maintained public toilets <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impede or exclude several user groups from using public toilets• Generate a sense of neglect• Attract vandalism and undesirable behaviour
Economic Significance	Well-designed and adequate public toilets <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase retail turnover, tourist numbers, and economic growth
Environmental Significance	Well-designed and adequate public toilets <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the use of public transportation• Encourage active transportation
Quality of Life	Poorly designed and inadequately maintained public toilets <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead to social isolation, loneliness, and depression among the older population• Prevent people with disabilities from taking part in everyday activities such as going to work, shopping, and socializing• Create safety concerns for women and transgender people• Lead to health risks and complications• Prevent homeless people from accessing public toilets

3.1 Public Toilet Design

An elemental attribute of public toilets is functional design. Public toilets that are poorly designed, for example, toilet stalls that are too small to accommodate baby strollers or children, inevitably impede or exclude several user groups from using public toilets. These groups include women or men with children, transgender individuals, people with disabilities, older persons, and homeless people (Bichard, Hanson, and Greed, 2008; Greed, n.d., Harris, 2011). Furthermore, public toilets that are badly designed and inadequately maintained generate a

sense of neglect, attracting vandalism and undesirable behaviour, including street fouling (DCLG, 2008; Frazier, 2011; Maag, 2008). For these reasons, inclusive and universal designs are advocated (Michael, 2008).

3.2 Economic Significance

Academic literature stresses the significance of public toilet provision for tourism. Greed (2009) argues that investment in adequate and well-designed public toilets increases retail turnover, tourist numbers, and economic growth. Greed's argument is supported by Department for Communities and Local Government [UK] (2008); Geoghegan (n.d.); and VisitBritain (as cited in Communities and Local Government Committee [UK], 2008), who add that being able to access a public toilet is a fundamental need of any visitor. Department for Communities and Local Government [UK] explains that "...tourists need more local information, more signposts. They cannot simply go home, into work, or their local pub to use the toilet" (p.14).

3.3 Environmental Significance

One goal of the Toronto Official Plan (2010) is to promote a more sustainable city. To this end, encouraging people out of their cars and onto public transport, as well as supporting cycling and walking infrastructure, is a basic requirement. As Department for Communities and Local Government [UK] (2008) and Molotch (2008) explain, restroom availability affects modes of transportation. When people are confident that public toilets will be available along their public transportation route, they are more inclined to leave their cars at home.

3.4 Quality of Life

Public spaces need to serve living beings, not disembodied actors. It is imperative that all individuals, regardless of their social location, including their gender, sexuality, level of income, and degree of able-bodiedness, have access to public toilets. By providing a public service that responds to a basic human need, public toilets are spaces that support embodiment and improve quality of life, particularly for marginalized social groups such as older people and people with disabilities.

3.4.1 Age

An adequate and accessible public toilet network is vital to enabling older people to take part in community life. Head of policy and public affairs for Age Cymru, a Welsh charity, explains that "a lack of clean and accessible toilets makes people wary of going out and this leads to problems such as social isolation, loneliness, and depression among the older population" (Francis, as cited in Bodden, 2012, n.p.). A report produced in the UK by Help the Aged, an older persons' advocacy organization, found that more than 50% of older people were unable to leave home as often as they would have liked due to a lack of public toilets (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008; Holmes, 2008). Age Cymru's campaigns coordinator Rhea Stevens asserts that "public toilets are a lifeline for older people, providing them with freedom, independence, and the confidence they need to lead fulfilling and active lives" (Stevens, as cited in Dulin, 2012, n.p.).

3.4.2 Disability

The harmful impact of inadequate public toilets perhaps is felt most profoundly by people with disabilities. Lack of accessible public toilets can prevent people with disabilities from taking part in everyday activities that others take for granted (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008). Without suitable public toilets, many disabled people and their families are able to make only short trips or are forced to remain housebound. Many caregivers risk their health and safety by changing a disabled person on a public toilet floor (Changing Places Consortium, as cited in Communities and Local Government Committee, 2008).

Isolation and fear of leaving home due to lack of accessible public toilets are two of the most common and distressing consequences experienced by people with disabilities. The fear of having an ‘accident’ in public can have a devastating effect on a disabled person’s ability to undertake everyday activities such as going to work, shopping, or socializing, and a lack of adequate facilities at “bus and train stations and on board trains” excludes many people with disabilities from using public transportation (National Association for Colitis and Crohn’s Disease, as cited in Communities and Local Government Committee, 2008, p.85). Furthermore, a report by Health and Public Services Committee [UK] (2006) found that being socially isolated may lead to depression.

Lack of accessible public toilets not only restricts a disabled person’s independence and lifestyle, but can have negative consequences for her/his health. A person might stop going to the doctor or picking up medication from the pharmacy, or possibly even stop buying fresh food from a supermarket (Logan, 2012). Critically, many people will stop drinking water if they know they need to be out in public to prevent the need to use public toilets. “This puts them at risk of dehydration ... and ... prone to urinary infections” (Logan, 2012, n.p.; Michael, 2008). These people become inactive and immobile and, more than anything, the lack of accessible public toilets “robs people of their dignity” (Logan, 2012, n.p.).

In addition to health risks, Anthony and Dufresne (2007) explain that both men and women suffer from invisible disabilities, intermittent or chronic medical conditions requiring increased restroom use. These disabilities include “overactive bladder, urinary tract infections, and chronic digestive illnesses such as irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, diverticular disease, and Crohn’s disease” (p.276).

3.4.3 Gender

There is a considerable collection of academic literature on the subject of public toilets and gender. The bulk of the literature discusses the lack of adequate and safe public toilets for women. As Greed (2009) discusses, women are particularly affected by lack of toilet provision because “they are the ones most frequently out and about in the daytime, travel on public transport more than men, and often are accompanied by children and/or elderly or disabled relatives” (p.36). Department for Communities and Local Government [UK] (2008) adds that women, with or without babies and young children, may be reluctant to use toilet facilities in pubs, “and some initiatives that aim to increase public access to toilets—e.g. late night ‘pop-up’ urinals in town centres—do not cater for the needs of women” (p.21). Furthermore, Anthony and Dufresne (2007) address the issue of “potty parity”—equal speed of access to public

restrooms—and argue that the absence of potty parity “mirrors the power structure reflected in the planning and design of restrooms that privileges men over women” (p.268).

The importance of inclusive public toilet design especially is relevant to transgender as well as to lesbian, gay, and bisexual people—binary gender toilet public toilets do not allow for complexity or ambiguity in gender presentation. Indeed, lack of unisex public toilets is a critical stumbling block to the health and safety of all people who do not physically conform to normative gender categories (Molotch, 2010). Cavanagh (2011) argues that “bi-gendered signage acts as a barrier to access for those who are trans or gender variant” (p.18). Also, as the Bangor Daily News (Transgender people, 2011) and Cavanagh explain, because of the increased likelihood of being harassed in a public restroom, privacy and dignity in public restrooms is a foremost concern of transgender people.

3.4.4 Public Health

The provision of adequate public toilets has consequences not only for physical and mental health. Dr. Stanwell-Smith (2010) adds that “public toilets have a small but significant part to play in the fight against infection, particularly by providing hand-washing facilities, but also in promoting hygienic behaviour, providing an essential service for a mobile population, and reducing street urination” (Stanwell-Smith, 2010, p.13).

Anthony and Dufresne (2007) consider the health risks associated with inadequate public toilet provision for women. They discuss how fear of contaminated toilet seats compels many women to hover over the toilet seat, restricting the flow of urine and resulting in the bladder not fully emptying. They add that even if a restroom is clean, holding urine while waiting in line makes a woman a potential candidate for cystitis and other urinary tract infections. Edwards and McKie (1996) add that pregnant women who are forced to wait in long restroom lines are particularly at risk for health problems, and Molotch (as cited in Gershenson and Penner, 2009) explains that the queues that result from women’s longer visits to the toilet place women under “special burdens of physical discomfort, social disadvantage, and psychological anxiety” when in public (p.12).

Men also experience health complications from poor public toilet design. As Anthony and Dufresne (2007) describe, a disorder called paruresis, difficulty or impossibility of urination in proximity to others, “affects more than 20 million Americans, or about 7 percent of the U.S. population” (p.276). Additionally, men often are targets of crime while using urinals—men’s rooms are notorious for “dangerous drug deals and other criminal activities” (p.277).

3.4.5 Homelessness

While housed people generally have access to toilet facilities, homeless people often are left searching for a public toilet. Enabling homeless people to access public toilets “shows respect for and helps with restoration of their human dignity” (Schanes, 2009, n.p.). Yet, urban theorist Mike Davis (1990) states that public toilets “have become the real frontline of the city’s war on the homeless” (as cited in Gershenson and Penner, 2009, p.9). Undesirable behaviours associated with homeless people, including vandalism, drug use, and sexual activity, have repeatedly been named as leading reasons for the closure of existing public toilets and the reluctance to provide additional public toilets (see, for example, Harris, 2011, n.p.). Webber

(2001) quotes a homeless person who states that “the fact that I can’t find anyplace to relieve myself in New York causes me lots of problems and pain. I have never been able to find bathrooms in the subways. They are always locked and unavailable. The bathrooms in the parks are in terrible condition and dangerous” (n.p.). McFarlane (as cited in Harris, 2011) argues that “we have a responsibility, particularly in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, to provide usable facilities. Aspects of these folks’ lives are already dehumanizing. To add that they’re forced to urinate in an alley is further dehumanizing” (Harris, 2011, n.p.).

By restricting the hours of operation of the APTs (Toronto’s APTs are open 15 hours per day, from 8am to 11pm), charging \$0.25 cents per use, imposing a 20 minute time limit, and selecting to locate both APTs along Toronto’s waterfront, an area of the city inhospitable to the city’s homeless population, Toronto specifically designed its APTs to shut out this population (Hinks, as cited in Archer, 2012). Yet, because access to restroom facilities in many public establishments often is prohibited to homeless people, the city’s homeless population has an especially acute need for accessible public toilets. Additionally, because of difficulties siting the APTs, it is unlikely that all 20 APTs ultimately will be installed (Fiona Chapman, personal communication, July 9, 2012), presenting still fewer prospects for homeless people to access public toilets in the city.

3.4.6 Planning for Public Toilets

A number of factors need to be taken into account when developing a public toilet strategy. Table 4 outlines the most important elements of the public toilet strategies implemented in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, three countries with very similar planning processes and issues to Canada.

Additionally, to illustrate the diversity of locations for public toilets in other cities, the appendix includes public toilet maps for Bedford Borough Council (England), the City of Sydney (Australia), the City of Vancouver, the City of Portland, as well as a map of public toilets on the London Underground. Clearly, other jurisdictions have been able to service their residents far better than has Toronto to date.

Table 4: Outline of Public Toilet Policies and Strategies from Australia, England, and New Zealand

Locality	Country	Policy/Strategy
Bayside <i>Bayside Public Toilet Strategy 2012</i>	Australia	Strategy provides guidelines for the design and siting of public toilets including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment of a coordinating management group of internal stakeholders • Being sensitive to the surrounding environment • Providing accessibility for people with disabilities • The role of other strategies and master plans • The preferred distance between public toilets • Incorporating CPTED principles • Configurations of public toilets for different locations • Desired fittings and fixtures • Incorporating environmental sustainability features (p.6)

Boroondara <i>Strategy for the Provision and Management of Public Toilet Facilities 2005</i>	Australia	Strategy developed in order to give direction to the capital and maintenance programs associated with public toilets and clarify Council's intent over the next five years. Goal: To contribute to the amenity of residents and visitors through the provision of high quality, accessible public toilets at suitable locations in the municipality (p.2).
Latrobe <i>Public Toilet Plan 2010-2014</i>	Australia	Purpose of the Plan is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop asset management plans for Latrobe City's public toilets • Develop a management plan for whole-of-life maintenance requirements for public toilets • Develop means to provide flexibility in the provision of public toilets to cater for changing demands of the community • Promote and support the development of public toilets that enhance the social and economic well-being of the Latrobe Valley • Develop a public toilet renewal program (p.5) Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management strategies • Strategic planning • Safe design and construction • Whole-of-life maintenance management • Upgrade, renewal, and decommissioning • Information collection, analysis, and distribution • Plan update
Melbourne <i>Public Toilet Plan 2008-2013</i>	Australia	The Public Toilet Plan 2008-2013 replaces and updates Toilet Management Plan 2002. Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain a network of safe, clean, and environmentally sustainable public toilets • To continuously improve the quality of the public toilet stock ensuring toilets are placed at locations that best meet community needs (p.3) Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset management • Location and use • Toilet design • Environmental sustainability
Mitchell Shire <i>Public Toilet Design Guidelines and Policy 2008</i>	Australia	Strategic objective: Public toilets should be clearly visible and easily accessible to all users. Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet location • Proximity issues • Environmentally sustainable design • External design considerations • Internal design • Alternative design option (composting or waterless toilets)
Moorabool Shire <i>Public Toilet Policy</i>	Australia	Purpose and scope of the Policy: To guide the development and maintenance of public toilets in meeting Council's obligations under relevant legislation (p.1). Addresses issues of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design principles • Location principles • Siting criteria • Accessibility • Cleaning of public toilets • Security of public toilets • Maintenance of buildings and facilities • Policy implementation

Tea Tree Gully <i>Public Toilets Policy</i>	Australia	<p>Purpose of Policy: To state Council's position in regards to the responsibility, maintenance, and accessibility of public toilets within the City of Tea Tree Gully.</p> <p>Policy: The provision of public toilet facilities provides a form of infrastructure necessary for the enjoyment of the city by visitors and residents. Council will aim to provide a clean, accessible, and safe environment by achieving high standards of hygiene and maintenance (p.3).</p> <p>Addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets located in public parks/reserves • Toilets located on leased reserve areas/properties • Toilets located in Council owned/controlled facilities • Maintenance of buildings/facilities • Policy implementation
Bath & North East Somerset <i>A Provision Strategy for Public Toilets in Bath & North East Somerset 2011-2026</i>	England	<p>Strategy for public toilet provision sets the standards of provision required by the Council and its residents through the public consultation (2009-10) related to quality, quantity, and distribution. Any new toilet provision, however it is to be delivered, needs to be demand-driven with the local community involved in the assessment and decision making. This strategy will enable resources to be targeted at the areas where public customer satisfaction needs to be improved and where the local community is involved in identifying a need. It also will establish a framework for future provision in a range of ways and by a range of providers (p.6).</p>
Cambridge <i>Draft Strategy for the Provision of Public Conveniences in Cambridge</i>	England	<p>Purpose of Strategy: The Council needs to consider a comprehensive approach to the provision of public conveniences in Cambridge. This document sets out a strategy for that future provision (p.1).</p> <p>Outcome of the Strategy is to provide public toilet facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At appropriate locations • That are well signed and provide information including opening times and an emergency contact telephone number • That are accessible to all • That are clean and safe to use • That meet modern standards and are legislation compliant • Discourage/eliminate anti-social behaviour • That are considerate to energy saving and natural resources <p>Addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points for action to inform the future provision of public toilets
Mid Sussex <i>Provision and Management of Public Toilets</i>	England	<p>Aims of the Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide town centre public toilets (with supportive facilities in the key town centre parks) for the three main towns in Mid Sussex • To divest the Council of rural public toilet facilities to Parish Councils with funding so to enable the Councils to upgrade those facilities • To develop new high-quality facilities as part of the Better Mid Sussex town regeneration schemes and to encourage these facilities to be provided by the private sector • To upgrade the remaining toilets by making reasonable adjustments so as to improve disabled access and to provide parent friendly toilet facilities (p.1)

Oxford <i>Review of Public Conveniences</i>	England	Purpose of Review: To provide a recommendation for delivering required savings and to utilize facilities available within the city (p.1). Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial issues • Strategic closure of some public conveniences in the city • Refurbish and charge for improved facilities • Automatic Public Conveniences • Community Toilet Scheme • Equalities issues • Climate change implications • Legal issues • Risk management
Central Otago District <i>Public Toilet Policy (as at July 2009)</i>	New Zealand	Goal of Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a network of public toilet facilities to service the tourist and traveling public • Provide public toilets for local community facilities such as shopping centres, parks, and recreational areas servicing local communities Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding sources • Capital works • Design • Demand forecasting/identifying
Far North District <i>Public Toilets Activity Management Plan 2009-2019</i>	New Zealand	Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most tourists in the Far North use the Twin Coast Discovery Trail. It is therefore appropriate to develop these toilets for the provision of high quality public conveniences • To locate public toilets in places that will support other facilities or activities, such as shopping, tourism, areas people move through in large numbers, and swimming • To identify aging stock so that those public toilets needing to be upgraded are renewed—with a particular focus on those buildings older than 20 years old • To rationalize delivery of public toilets in areas such as Kerikeri and Kaitaia • To provide a partnership service where appropriate • To take into consideration the benefits to the community of each investment in public toilets (p.2) Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of service, relationship to community outcomes, and performance measures • Maintenance and operating cost
Wellington <i>Public Conveniences Policy 2002</i>	New Zealand	Aim of the Policy: Clean, well-maintained public conveniences that are accessible, safe, and strategically situated (p.2). Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current service • Roles • Policy principles • Application of policy • Site assessment • Siting guidelines • Refurbish, replace, relocate, or disestablish?
Thames Coromandel District <i>Draft Public Toilet Strategy 2011</i>	New Zealand	Intent: To guide the provision, rationalisation, and feasibility of accessible public toilet facilities and infrastructure across the Thames Coromandel District for the next ten years (p.2). Addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing toilet supply • Future planning

4.0 Public Toilet Survey: Research Methods

4.1 Public Toilet Strategy and Policy Review

Public toilet strategies and policies from a range of cities in North America, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand were examined in order to establish why a public toilet strategy is developed, how the public toilet strategy integrates with other government priorities and services, and what the core aim and objectives of a public toilet strategy need to consider.

4.2 Site Visits and Field Observation

This research draws on site visits in Toronto, Vancouver, and Portland, Oregon. The site visits were conducted in order to observe where the public toilets were located and to develop a better understanding of their social and spatial context.

4.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Ten face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted with current and former city representatives in Calgary, Toronto, Seattle, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Denver; a community activist in Portland, Oregon; and the owner of a facilities management company in Atlanta. These interviews took place between July 5, 2012 and September 28, 2012.

Table 5: Interviews

Interviewee	City	Job Title	Type of Interview
Tom Carrollo	Portland, OR	General manager of downtown Portland's Beardsley Building Development and member of the Old Town Chinatown Neighborhood Association	Face-to-face
Fiona Chapman	Toronto, ON	Manager of Street Furniture at the City of Toronto	Face-to-face
Cindy Davies	Edmonton, AB	Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue	Telephone
Louis Herrera	Atlanta, GA	President, Public Facilities and Services, Inc.	Telephone
Sandy Kraus	Seattle, WA	Former Public Toilet Project Manager at Seattle Public Utilities; Responsible for overseeing coordination and installation of APTs	Face-to-face

Mark Upshaw	Denver, CO	Architect and urban planner at the City of Denver	Telephone
Lorna Wallace	Calgary, AB	Senior Project Manager at the City of Calgary; Responsible for acquiring and overseeing coordination and installation of APTs	Telephone
Grant Woff	Vancouver, BC	Engineer at the City of Vancouver	Face-to-face
	Calgary, AB	Representative at the City of Calgary	Telephone
	Edmonton, AB	Social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives	Telephone

Interviews were conducted in order to acquire a more comprehensive picture of public toilet provision than could be acquired through only a review of published documents. The interviews provided further insight into, for example, the complex practical, social, and political challenges of public toilet provision, the process of conducting an in-depth study into public toilet provision, and the significance of grassroots advocacy to the success of a public toilet provision program. The interviews informed the analysis in this paper by enabling the identification of themes and questions to consider, by initiating a discourse between diverse perspectives on public toilet provision, and by facilitating the development of recommendations for a public toilet provision strategy in Toronto.

In general, interview questions were open-ended and free-form, following the flow of the conversation rather than pre-structured. Only the Toronto and one Calgary interview were structured. These questions are included below.

Questions for Fiona Chapman (Toronto):

- What is the most challenging aspect of public toilet provision?
- Why did you decide to provide public toilets?
- How did you decide where the public toilets would be located?
- How did you decide on APT design?
- Did you consult with social service agencies or members of the public?
- Are there any provisions in the City's budget for the public toilets?
- Will all 20 toilets eventually have a home?
- Does the City of Toronto have or intend to produce a public toilet provision plan?
- How are hours of operation and cost determined?
- Are homeless people expected to pay to use the APTs?
- Will more public toilets be included in subway stations?
- Who needs public washrooms?

Questions for Lorna Wallace (Calgary):

- What is the most challenging aspect of public toilet provision?
- Why and when did you decide to provide public toilets?
- What were some considerations that went into the design of Calgary's APT?
- How did you decide where the APT would be located?
- Is the APT fee-for-use?
- How did the report "Public Toilets in the Centre City" inform your public toilet provision initiative?

- Did you consult with social service agencies or members of the public?
- Do you have criteria by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the APT?

4.4 Limitations

Given the limited scope of this research project, logistical and practical issues of public toilet provision, such as the advantages and drawbacks of different public toilet designs, and the development of a wayfinding strategy, were not addressed, and many cities with public toilet programs were not contacted. Furthermore, research findings must be adjusted to reflect each municipality's unique characteristics. Regrettably, Astral Media, with whom the City of Toronto has its street furniture contract, and Hering Bau, the supplier of Toronto's Automated Public Toilets, declined to participate in this research project.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Politics of Public Toilet Provision

In Toronto, as in other Western urban centres, the need for public toilets rarely is a priority of planning (Cowen et al., 2005). As town planner Clara Greed (n.d.) asserts,

it is often said that local authorities cannot afford to provide public toilets, but it is argued it is really a matter of political priorities and political will. They have no difficulty providing for fountains, statues, extravagant urban regeneration schemes and inflated salaries for their senior officers. (p.6)

MP Jon Owen Jones (cited in Edwards & McKie, 1996), a former British councillor, adds,

personally, I don't believe that the financial burden [of more toilets] is anything that local authorities couldn't afford. I think it comes down to how many councillors would want to see their names on plaques outside a local toilet which has been provided rather than, say, a local swimming pool. (p.226)

These two quotes give patent evidence of the political nature of planning. As Tom Carrollo, general manager of downtown Portland's Beardsley Building Development and member of the Old Town Chinatown Neighborhood Association, maintained, public toilet provision in particular is a process that often can be inherently political:

When you go to apply for a permit to use the park for a festival, the city wants to know how many people you're going to have, then they tell you how many restrooms you need, by code. But, the city owns the park, knows how many people use the park, and, till the Portland Loo was there, didn't have any restrooms for the people. So, it's a very hypocritical policy. (Personal communication, August 7, 2012)

Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, expressed disappointment at the double standards of the public with regards to the placement of portable toilet units:

In the downtown there are fewer places to put them [portable toilets] easily. In the downtown there's some lack of right-of-way, there's more private land,

and we have to put them on city land, then they're on sidewalks. What's quite interesting is that two years ago we were required to remove some because of outcry, but we did a scanning around the area and within five blocks in either direction there was something like thirty portable toilets that were on the streets for construction purposes. So, some aspects of this are quite hard to understand people's reactions You can go by City Hall and there are all kinds of portable toilets out for the street performers' festival and things like that. But if you try and put one a few blocks away in an entertainment area, people react to that. It's very odd, and you can't predict it. How people react is really quite unpredictable. (Personal communication, August 23, 2012)

Planning for public toilets can involve more than contending with hypocritical planning policies and double standards from the community. Tom Carrollo, general manager of downtown Portland's Beardsley Building Development, discussed how, considering the high cost of public toilets, public toilet provision can be a politically risky manoeuvre:

Given this new budget austerity that almost all public governments are under, those are kind of political suicide if the government ends up spending millions of dollars on a dozen restrooms or a small number of restrooms. Whoever makes that decision runs a great risk of public backlash. Even if it works, people are going to say, "Look how much you spend to do a bathroom—it's crazy." (Personal communication, August 7, 2012)

In view of the potential for public criticism, one especially dominant theme regarding public toilet provision is the need for advocacy—both from citizens and city officials. Tom Carrollo explained:

What PHLUSH [Public Hygiene Lets Us Stay Human] discovered, their biggest asset was their advocacy, and to try to give elected officials enough confidence that there was grassroots support, that taking on this issue wouldn't be political suicide for them. (Personal communication, August 7, 2012)

Likewise, Sandy Kraus, former Public Toilet Project Manager at Seattle Public Utilities, contended that

it's not a project that's going to run perfectly, because everyone's going to have problems with it. Everyone has to understand that there are positive aspects to the program and negative aspects to the program. People—the neighbourhoods, the cities, the governments, everyone—have to be on board, knowing, as they say, with their eyes wide open, that it's not going to be easy, it's not going to be clean, it's not going to be perfect, and there's going to be a lot of pushback. In order for this kind of a program to be successful, you need someone who believes in it, fights for it, and doesn't just roll over. I would talk to people who would complain. I would take time with them. I would discuss their issues. (Personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Similarly, Lorna Wallace, Senior Project Manager at the City of Calgary, argued that

things are never perfect, they really aren't. You know, they are public washrooms. They're used by all kinds of Calgarians, and there's sometimes Calgarians that don't have another place to go, so on occasion there'll be clothing or whatever left behind ... It does need maintenance. It does need to have a program. You need to have people who are committed as part of their work plan to keep an eye on it. (Personal communication, July 5, 2012)

One of the primary challenges to public toilet provision is concern from the community and from businesses that public toilets will act as a magnet for undesirable activity in the neighbourhood. However, as Grant Woff, engineer at the City of Vancouver, explained, "Prior to installation, businesses and residents are against the installation; however, once the toilet is in, there are virtually no complaints" (personal communication, August 10, 2012).

Public toilet provision is an inherently political process. Hypocritical planning policies and double standards from the community, as well as the potential for public backlash, make public toilet provision a politically precarious manoeuvre. Yet, grassroots and staff support of city officials and, critically, recognition that "it's not going to be easy, it's not going to be clean, it's not going to be perfect, and there's going to be a lot of pushback" (S. Kraus, personal communication, August 8, 2012), will set the stage for an effective and sustainable public toilet program.

5.1.1 Why Provide Public Toilets?

Generally, cities provide public toilets to appease business owners weary of requests by non-patrons for use of their restroom facilities and to curb public excretion, which is seen as a quality of life issue for residents and business owners. Lorna Wallace, Senior Project Manager at the City of Calgary, stated that

we found in the research paper that we had quite a need for them, and we also heard from businesses, and also from the public, that there weren't enough public washrooms and we needed to have some available so that people who weren't patrons of the business had an option, rather than going into a business for a public washroom. (Personal communication, July 5, 2012)

Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, asserted that "Late night urination is one of the factors considered to be a quality of life issue for residents and adjacent businesses" (personal communication, August 23, 2012). Sandy Kraus, former Public Toilet Project Manager at Seattle Public Utilities, revealed how public toilets address quality of life issues for homeless people as well:

I really believed in it. I thought it was a really great service. I mean, I know people needed it. I know the homeless needed it. I had homeless people come up to me and, although I was a little nervous, they'd come up to me and say, "Oh, do you manage this?" And I'd say, "Yes." And they'd say, "Thank you so much. I mean we have nowhere else to go." (Personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Despite the impact of public toilets on the quality of life of residents, businesses, and homeless people, Sandy Kraus insisted that

the city and the neighbourhood really need to feel that this something very important. There has to be a really strongly identified need for public toilets. You can't impose it from the top down. You can't impose it because someone thinks it's a cool idea. I think there has to be a screaming need for it—a real super duper need for it. That people really want it. They need to beg you. (Personal communication, August 8, 2012)

5.1.2 Where are the Toilets Located?

In bladder voiding, as in real estate, it's location, location, location.

The Big Bang Theory, Season 2, Episode 15

As noted above, there are currently only two public toilets sited within the City of Toronto. Additionally, to illustrate the diversity of public toilet maps, the appendix includes public toilet maps for Bedford Borough Council (England), the City of Sydney (Australia), the City of Vancouver, the City of Portland, as well as a map of public toilets on the London Underground.

More than any other variable relating to public toilet provision, interviewees identified finding a suitable location for the public toilet as the primary challenge of public toilet provision. The overriding consensus was that “It’s never good for restrooms to be hidden away” (M. Upshaw, personal communication, September 28, 2012). A social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary asserted that

you have to think about where you place it and who you're placing it there for. If you put it down a dark alley because that's where people have been going to relieve themselves, well, there are a lot of folks who won't go down dark alleys. Then there are other folks who like dark alleys just fine. I think that's probably the prime consideration—where are you going to locate this? (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

Sandy Kraus, former Public Toilet Project Manager at Seattle Public Utilities, related:

I'd go into a neighbourhood and the people would say, “Oh we want the Porta Potty, but could you put it way back there in that back alley?” And, no, that's not going to work. So—here's the deal with any kind of public facility like this—you really, and this is how I'd explain it, you really have to balance the aspect of “Ooh, we don't want to see it,” with criminals or ne'er-do-wells, so to speak ... doing things that they shouldn't be doing. So, really, the best place is like, right in front of everyone, in the middle of the intersection with bright lights on it. (Personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, explained, “The more traffic you have, the better it's cared for” (personal communication, August 23, 2012). The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary stressed that public toilets need to be placed in “an area where there's traffic, and if that happens to be an area where there's all

different segments of the population, then that's fine. But, you make a decision on the basis that there will be people around it, people who will keep an eye on it." She continued:

I think you have to take the toilets out of the back alleys and the hidden, shameful places, and put them out where they're easily found, so people aren't trying to skulk around, trying to find where on Earth is there a toilet, and you've got to include them in the maps and things of cities, so that people can access them. There's not much sense in having them unless people can access them fairly easily, and feel safe doing it, so I think that's the critical piece. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

Fiona Chapman, Manager of Street Furniture at the City of Toronto, discussed the challenges of siting Toronto's public toilets because of the need to place them in the public right-of-way:

The most important thing to me with regards to the APT is the challenge of getting them sited—it's a fairly large element so you need sufficient right-of-way. And so what I'm seeing is that to a large degree the options for us tend to be more focussed around public parks or tourist areas rather than more densely populated areas that have a lot of people and obvious needs for APTs.

She elaborated on the challenges of siting the APTs exclusively on right-of-ways, including the probability that, because of these challenges, all 20 APTs likely would not be installed:

If you ask me what the plan is, it's been try to get these on the right-of-way. I mean, if you think about it, it would be perfect to have one of these all along the waterfront. These are wonderful tourist areas and there's not a lot of places to stop and eat. But, where do you go from there? There's the commercial areas, but where would you put it, short of taking a building out. It's because of the right-of-ways. Honestly, we can barely get any square footage on the streets, like in the downtown areas—it's very challenging. Given how hard they are to site, I think that unless we made a decision to put them in parks from here on in ... My take is that unless you make a decision, a very matter of fact decision, to either embed them with new developments going in, or b) if they begin to front in parks, city parks, I don't see how we actually can get them out.

Finding the ideal location for a public toilet is the central challenge of public toilet provision and relies to a great extent on the collaborative planning process. Because of potential community resistance to the installation of a public toilet, Tom Carrollo, general manager of downtown Portland's Beardsley Building Development, asserted that

site selection is always a challenge because you get a lot of NIMBYism with the location. Even though people welcome the functionality, they don't want it near them at all. So you've got to do a good job of public outreach and include the public in the site selection. (Personal communication, August 7, 2012)

Intragovernmental teamwork is as valuable as teamwork between the government and community representatives. Mark Upshaw, architect and urban planner at the City of Denver, related that “our Restroom Master Plan interfaced with plans for other government departments” (personal communication, September 28, 2012). The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary described how

the Planning Department was instrumental in helping identify the location criteria. They were part of the “Centre City Integrated Action Team.” We had access to people in planning who’d say, no, you need a permit, or you need this or you need that. Who were there to help with what was a civic initiative. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

5.1.3 Public Toilets for Whom?

Because public toilet provision fundamentally concerns people’s mobility—how and whether people move through space—the provision of public toilets is, in essence, an issue about equitable access to a public resource. Because of its considerable impact on quality of life, it is imperative that all people have access to public toilets. Yet, all people do not have equal access to this resource. Public toilets that are badly designed, inadequately maintained, and poorly located habitually result in older people, people with disabilities, women—with or without babies and young children, transgender people, and homeless people being unable to access public toilets.

Mark Upshaw, architect and urban planner at the City of Denver, argued that “The right to use restroom services is a civil right” (personal communication, September 28, 2012). The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary explained that the orientation of Calgary’s public toilet restroom initiative was

whoever needed to use the toilet, needed to use the toilet. And that if we located it properly, it would be used by people, by all kinds of people, including homeless people. We wanted it to be clean enough that people would use it, and locate it in such a way that anyone would feel safe using it. That’s some of the discussion that happens as you’re trying to advance an idea. That’s some of the discussion—what if these kinds of people use it, or what if those kinds of people use it, and our approach was, well, if people need to find a place to go to the bathroom, we want them to be able to use it. And if it’s appropriately situated, and it’s the right kind of public toilet, we have confidence that it won’t be a ... magnet for really unsavoury kinds of activities. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

Equal access to a public toilet might be judged a “civil right” (M. Upshaw, personal communication, September 28, 2012); however, Sandy Kraus, former Public Toilet Project Manager at Seattle Public Utilities, maintained that not all people have an equal need to access a public toilet:

Who is your audience? Because it was clear, because we did some research, who really needed the service. The tourists don’t need the service. Oh, sure, they’re looking for bathrooms, but they can go into the Olympic

Hotel, Macy's, Nordstrom's. I mean, you're eating at restaurants. They're really not the clientele. Oh, sure, an occasional tourist. At the Pike Place market we would have a line up of tourists. Generally, it's the homeless. (Personal communication, August 8, 2012)

Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, elaborated on which people are most in need of public toilets:

For Whyte Avenue, the clusters of people we identified who needed toilet facilities were daytime shoppers and visitors, street people, and the late night crowd. Over the past 25 years, increasingly coffee shops, fast food outlets, and gas stations, and places like that have put up "customer only" signs. So, during the day, you can't just walk into a coffee shop, use their washroom, and leave. You have to go get the key. So, it wasn't just daytime and night-time users, it was everyone needing toilets and certainly street people are part of that. And as the baby-boomers age, the accessibility of public washrooms becomes more and more imminent. (Personal communication, August 23, 2012)

Furthermore, a representative at the City of Calgary stressed that

council wants to be providing public toilets that relate to vibrancy, so public toilets that allow seniors, and moms, and parents with small children, and cyclists, etc., to go to the washroom while they're downtown. But, really, the population who desperately needs them is the homeless population. (Personal communication, September 21, 2012)

One of the greatest sources of tension regarding public toilet provision is the conflict between the aspiration to provide public toilets for a range of users, and the reality that public toilets often are used by particular groups of people, for example, people with substance abuse issues and people who use the toilets for sexual activity, in such a way that renders the public toilets seemingly unusable by many. As Fiona Chapman, Manager of Street Furniture at the City of Toronto, explained "There would be community concerns that these washrooms did not become a place for the homeless to sleep or for people to do inappropriate things—this was something that was here for communities" (personal communication, July 9, 2012). The representative at the City of Calgary elaborated on the conflict between hope and reality relating to public toilet provision:

The Riverwalk is beautiful. It has really, really high traffic—cyclists, runners, walkers, people with kids—it's a really high traffic area. It's quite lovely, yet we haven't cracked this thing around being able to provide public toilets to the general public because these ones are so often abused by people who . . . are looking for a place to have some privacy. The users are not the general public, and the people who do use them, use them in such a way that it makes them less useable by the general public. (Personal communication, September 21, 2012)

The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary reflected on possible techniques to manage this conflict:

The one approach kind of narrows the range of solutions or considerations. How do we stop this from happening? Well, we can change people, and we can get people out there to clean up the area, and I don't know what kinds of things you can do just in terms of cleaning it up or making people not do that. That kind of narrows the focus. If we broaden it beyond just how do we stop this from happening to what is happening here, and how do we clean it up in a way that works for all citizens, there are people for whom, who's access to the broader community is somewhat limited because of the lack or the availability of places where they can safely use a washroom. To frame it, this is my social work background speaking, to come at it from a positive kind of frame rather than, well, people who would do that are uncivilized or clearly beyond the pale. Well, maybe they are, and maybe it's the fact that if you've got to go, you've got to go. And we need to think about that. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

5.1.4 Fee for Use or Free?

Should there be a charge to use a public toilet? According to Lorna Wallace, Senior Project Manager at the City of Calgary, "Unless ... you thought it was for the greater good of people, then that's fine. But ... that's not philosophically what we want to do. We just made a business choice, an ethical choice, as well as a strategic choice not to charge a fee" (personal communication, July 5, 2012). In contrast to Calgary's decision not to charge for use of its public toilets, Fiona Chapman, Manager of Street Furniture at the City of Toronto, argued:

There was always that notion that if you charge people something, there was a sense of getting something for it—value for your money. Whereas, when things are deemed to be completely free, often people don't treat them as well, which is one of the reasons why the token program was developed. (Personal communication, July 9, 2012)

The City of Toronto's Automated Public Toilets (APT at Queens Quay Boulevard and Rees Street pictured below) cost \$0.25 cents per use. Free-washroom-use tokens were to be distributed to homeless people via Streets to Homes, a 24/7 street outreach and housing assistance service. While Ms. Chapman stated that, "Not a lot of tokens have been distributed. I presume that a lot of the [homeless] community isn't down at the foot of Rees and Queens Quay" (personal communication, July 9, 2012), staff from Streets to Homes were entirely unaware of the existence of a free-washroom-use token program for the city's public toilet. This critical lack of communication between the city and a partner social service agency helps to ensure the chronic scarcity of public toilets for Toronto's homeless and illustrates the importance of collaborative planning and the creation of a public toilet provision strategy.

Figure 2: Automated Public Toilet in Toronto



Source: <http://www.toronto.ca/involved/projects/streetfurniture/>

5.2 The Planning Process

5.2.1 Public Toilet Provision Strategies

I think what's wonderful about the report [Public Toilets in the Centre City], and wonderful about what we did, is we have a platform and a place to turn from. And it gives us a lot of learning and a lot of ideas all in one place. We have a great place to start from, and all the work is done. (L. Wallace, personal communication, July 5, 2012)

A public toilet provision strategy promotes the establishment of a goal and objectives for public toilet provision, as well as the articulation of vision and value statements. The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary talked about how

at first it sounds like a simple thing, just putting in a public toilet, until you look at what kind of toilet, where, why, who'll pay for it—a whole myriad of questions and issues that come up. So [Public Toilets in the Centre City] was meant to provide broad brushstrokes around—this is what the state of thinking is about public toilets—and it's sort of a process of funneling down—and this is what we think we would do with our public toilet. This is what we would recommend. It was to be able to have people read in a relatively few pages, and follow our process of reasoning, as to why we would recommend the toilet in Tompkins Park. "Public Toilets in the Centre City" was intended to inform council and the readers about the whole range of considerations around public toilet provision. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, expanded on the factors that need to be taken into account when providing a public toilet:

Toilets are just one small piece of the work we're doing, one small piece of the puzzle. For entertainment zones or downtown areas you've got to look at the planning, managing, and policing holistically. Just putting in toilets is only one small part of a much bigger piece. When we looked at it, we looked at lots of other solutions in addition to putting in toilets, like improved signage to existing facilities, providing a maintenance service to existing facilities to encourage them to once again give public access, temporary amenities for gatherings and events to make sure we've got enough for any kind of activity that happens in the streets and parks in the area. We looked at temporary urinals and temporary toilets, and permanent urinals and permanent toilets, single door units with sinks and hand cleanser on the outside, multiple single door units, and social entrepreneurship models of maintenance. We also looked at whether there were permanent existing facilities that we could turn into an information centre or ticket booth and provide public toilets, and then lastly we looked at Automated Public Toilets. (Personal communication, August 23, 2012)

5.2.2 Public Outreach

You had to reach out and find those allies and work with those people who brought that expertise to the table. You have to find some way of including the community. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

If finding a suitable location for a public toilet is the primary challenge of public toilet provision, conducting public outreach before installing a public toilet is the primary necessity. Almost everyone interviewed maintained that collaborative planning—consulting with not only members of the public, but with, for example, Business Improvement Areas/Business Revitalization Zones, bylaw officers, social service agencies, and community groups—was a fundamental strategy in their public toilet provision efforts. For example, Responsible Hospitality Edmonton administered a public washroom survey, available online and by phone, to night time patrons, daytime shoppers, business owners, residents, and employees of the Old Strathcona and Downtown areas. Feedback from the survey enabled the City of Edmonton to select Whyte Avenue as an ideal location for a permanent public toilet, and assisted with toilet design criteria (Responsible Hospitality Edmonton, n.d.). Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, explained that

Businesses, residents, patrons, bar owners—there was no one who didn't identify the lack of public toilets day and night as an issue. The wisdom is in the community, and the community is the people who live or work there, or visit there, or the city crews who provide service to the area. You have to engage everyone because for every easy solution there is a problem. (Personal communication, August 23, 2012)

Sandy Kraus, former Public Toilet Project Manager at Seattle Public Utilities, elaborated on the importance of community engagement:

We have a lot of community groups, we have neighbourhood groups, we have business groups, and we just have movers and shakers in the

neighbourhoods. And I convened a lot of meetings, went to a lot of meetings, had some public meetings, you know, just to try and establish some consensus and get by in the neighbourhoods, which is absolutely crucial if you're going to do anything along those lines. (Personal communication, August 8, 2012)

The representative at the City of Calgary discussed how

we have a group called "Engage," and we use a process called "Engage," where the level of citizen participation is based on what you're trying to achieve. Certainly for the installation of something like a public toilet we would start with the community association, and surrounding residents, and surrounding businesses, and there would be at least one open house opportunity, things in the community, newsletter, that kind of thing." (Personal communication, September 21, 2012)

The significance of teamwork, particularly regarding debates about where to locate the public toilet, was addressed by Lorna Wallace, Senior Project Manager at the City of Calgary. Ms. Wallace stated that "We worked with CPTED [Crime Prevention through Environmental Design], we worked with Council key services, we worked with all of our bylaw officers; we worked as a team to consider where we chose location" (personal communication, July 5, 2012). Tom Carrollo explained that "The Mayor at the time, Tom Potter, set up a restroom implementation team, and it included members of social service agencies, PHLUSH, Portland Parks, a few of the agencies of the city government, and we all worked together to find some key spots." (personal communication, August 7, 2012).

Sandy Kraus, former Public Toilet Project Manager at Seattle Public Utilities, discussed the importance of effective problem solving and communication skills to a collaborative planning effort: "You definitely needed someone who really supported the program and knew how to deal with it, and was able to go and talk to people about the issues and be a good problem solver because things always came up." She continued:

I worked with the community. So I would go back, and there would be problems, and I would say, "Okay, look. I understand there's a problem and I know what the problem is. We have to turn it around, or we have to move it here, or we have to move it there. Let's try that." So, I would try to be very flexible with the neighbourhood. And try to work with them." (Personal communication, August 8, 2012)

5.3 Policy Transfer

Both the City of Calgary and the City of Edmonton conducted research into public toilet programs in other jurisdictions in order to inform their own public toilet provision initiatives. The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary explained that

we were intending that there were going to be public toilets, and so it seemed important to say, well, how have other people done it, like how many public toilets? Where do you put them? On what basis do you say do we have enough or do we not have enough, or is one every 500 metres, is that a good

idea? How have other people done it? And we started to look at what other areas, and basically, no one's really done very much work in that area or thinking in that area. I think we found some place in, I can't remember where, where they actually tried to work out a ratio, but really, most people were, like, put them in problem areas, that would have been the kind of approach that was taken, and that had the potential to create its own problems. There's Jane Jacobs "eyes on the street," and as we worked, as we examined things, it became clear that, really, and this is what you do in many parts of Britain, you want to put a public toilet where there are people keeping an eye on it. People haven't done that. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, discussed that

between Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, and Edmonton, we've communicated quite a bit relative to toilets. Gathering information on how theirs were working out before we made a decision. So when we put our public toilet design forward, it was custom designed with an extensive collection of criteria from the people who would have to police it, maintain it, and use it. (Personal communication, August 23, 2012)

She continued:

[The City of Edmonton] looked at what Vancouver had done, and cities throughout the UK and the US were doing . . . and we didn't feel that an APT would address our late night needs. And from a maintenance perspective, while it cleans itself between people, if homeless people take their change of clothes in there, people leave their Tim Horton's cup or whatever else, you still need humans to clean it. Those were primary reasons in addition to making sure it would work at -40. It needs to meet cold requirements, and Calgary's does, but our main reason is that we didn't feel that a single unit would meet the volume of people required. (Personal communication, August 23, 2012)

6.0 Analysis

6.1 Who Provides Public Toilets?

Public restrooms, while they are a human necessity, have pretty much been left to the McDonald's of the world. (L. Herrera, personal communication, July 18, 2012).

Should the city maintain exclusive responsibility for the provision of public toilets, or should the private sector maintain a degree of responsibility for public toilet provision? The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary commented that

the city's role is not necessarily to provide public toilets, but to see that toileting facilities are available to people at a variety of times and a variety of locations. How they do that is up to them. Maybe it's a combination of a whole different range of opportunities. But the reality is that nobody . . . in the public realm, very few cities have a finger on the pulse of what's available. If you're at this place at this time of the day or night, what access do you have to a toilet? So, nobody really has that kind of bigger picture. I think that trying to get a grasp on that bigger picture is the city's responsibility because they are responsible for the public realm and the streets, etc. But how they go about it once they identify gaps or areas where something is needed, how they go about filling that, is kind of up to them. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

The representative at the City of Calgary noted that:

the other thing, though, the other discussion that's been going on, is private versus public. So my focus is on the Centre City, and we have tons of entertainment venues, and public buildings, and all that kind of stuff, and the question is: Why don't more of those venues provide access to toilets? Of course, our malls and so on, in conversations with their security and their operators, the cost of providing a public toilet is pretty onerous because of both cleaning and security. It's a constant need to address that and, their pushback to us is why should they bear that cost. We do have City Hall, and the libraries all have public toilets, and there are a couple other public

buildings like that where you can access public toilets, and our libraries have never-ending issues. So, the question then becomes: Where does the public library get the resources to manage public toilets in their building, and that's a hard question to answer. Our city hall has toilets that remain open to the public, and, you know, we just eat the cost of keeping them clean and safe. (Personal communication, September 21, 2012)

6.1.1 Community Toilet Scheme

There are two main providers of public toilets in North America—municipal governments and the commercial/retail sector. In the UK, the Community Toilet Scheme, whereby municipal governments work in partnership with local businesses in order to offer the public access to a toilet, could be examined as a new model for public toilet provision in North America. The Community Toilet Scheme was adopted by a number of British municipal governments to make existing toilets in private premises available to the public. While Community Toilet Schemes differ in detail, the general principal is that “local authorities work in partnership with local businesses to provide access for the public to clean, safe toilets and may provide a payment to participating local businesses” (Communities and Local Government, 2008, p.22).

6.2 Normalizing Public Toilet Use

To quote the title of a popular children's book written by Taro Gomi (1993), “Everyone Poops.” Everyone needs to use the toilet. Yet, there is a popular mythology that only homeless people need to use public toilets. The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary discussed how

the other piece is normalizing it. It's not just homeless people who have to use the toilet. What Clara Greed talks about—“away from home toilets.” Everybody needs one. I think there are opportunities to normalize it, and then to say, “You know, this is a world class city. For a world class city, we really kind of have to get a grip on it.” A world class city makes sure that people who come here can find a toilet. Certainly there's a toilet in the basement of the Bay. But make toilets accessible, publicize where they're at, as part of that whole downtown mapping and place-making kind of thing. A civilized city provides places for people to go to the bathroom. They're always looking at that and trying to improve. It's not a sexy issue, but when you start the conversation, loads of people are willing to engage in that conversation—it's something people can relate to. And if you start it from the perspective of, if you frame it as—it's an opportunity for this city to be better, or greater, or whatever, rather than just how do we stop people from going to the bathroom in places that are ... where there's no toilet. If you frame it from an opportunity perspective, I think that makes the dialogue much more easily fostered. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

6.3 Timing

The social worker involved in public toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary also considered the issue of timing—is there an ideal time for a city to examine public toilet provision? As she explained:

The other piece is timing. The City was going through this work with the East Village, and with the whole kind of thinking of the Centre City in different ways, and how do we retain kind of a vibrant hub in the Centre City and what does that mean, so there was a whole development process and consultations happening at the same time. And so timing wise it worked. I think if things are pretty well set it may be a little harder to generate that conversation. But, Calgary was looking at what are we going to do, what does this mean, and how do we achieve a vibrant core, so that discussion was underway which may have made the whole thing a little easier. (Personal communication, August 28, 2012)

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

You wonder what it says about our country and culture that we don't take responsibility, individually or collectively, for having clean facilities for people to use. (Soifer, as cited in Au, 2007)

Public toilet provision constitutes the “vital, missing link that would enable the creation of sustainable, accessible, and inclusive cities” (Greed, 2006, p.128). By making it possible for all individuals, regardless of their social location—including their gender, sexuality, level of income, and degree of able-bodiedness—to access the city, public toilets create a livelier and more liveable city. Yet, competing visions and values regarding the provision of public toilets—pragmatic and public health concerns on one hand and social anxieties on the other—has produced a chronic inadequacy of public toilets in cities across North America.

Because of competing visions and values regarding the nature of public toilets, providing public toilets in Toronto historically has been a troubled endeavour. More than one hundred years after the first public toilet was installed in Toronto, this city still grapples with trying to accommodate what it perceives as the competing demands of public toilet availability and public safety. Because public toilet provision often is a thorny and fiercely contested issue, yet one with high stakes for many people, it is critical to examine not only whether, but how a program of public toilet provision is implemented; how a public toilet program is implemented has a direct impact on who will have access to public toilets.

The development of a public toilet strategy that incorporates feedback from collaborative planning exercises is critical to the establishment of an effective and sustainable public toilet program. A public toilet strategy promotes the establishment of a goal and objectives for public toilet provision, as well as the articulation of vision and value statements. Yet, because there are a number of challenges to public toilet provision, including finding a suitable location for the public toilet unit, it is crucial that city representatives are prepared to re-evaluate and modify the strategy over time. Consequently, evaluation criteria, which support the formation of short- and long-term objectives, should be a central component of a public toilet provision strategy. Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, described the City of Edmonton's evaluation procedure: “The group that designed it, maintains and polices it, and will get together and have a monthly evaluation meeting. And will at some point have to develop a usage criteria” (personal communication, August 23, 2012). As the social worker involved in public

toilet planning initiatives at the City of Calgary asserts, the central idea is “... getting people together and having the discussion. And trying to see it as a value added thing, a return on investment thing” (personal communication, August 28, 2012).

Whereas evaluation criteria can provide an indication of the present condition of a city’s public toilet scheme, incorporating public toilets into plans for future development projects is a crucial consideration of long-range planning. Cindy Davies, Street as a Venue Coordinator, Whyte Avenue, stressed:

The other aspect of looking at toilet use is having access to toilets in LRT stations, transit centres, and new centres—having access to public toilets in those kinds of places. How can you put criteria in place for buildings that are being built in areas, and is there something that can be done relative to increasing access to public toilets in that way. We still need to look at is there a way to encourage all the Tim Horton’s and Second Cups that are in the downtown area—what do they need to make their toilets more publically accessible. There’s still a lot more to be done and people need access to restrooms—it’s such a basic requirement of humanity. So anything we can do to make them more available and make them easier for people to find, the more liveable and sociable it makes our city. (Personal communication, August 23, 2012)

In September 2006, The City of Toronto released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for its Co-ordinated Street Furniture Program. As noted above, the “Rollout Schedule” for the city’s street furniture included only very modest provisions for new Automated Public Toilets (APTs), and only two such APTs have been installed to date. The locations of Toronto’s two public toilets to date suggest that they are not primarily intended to service the local population, including Toronto’s homeless population, but instead to bolster the tourist industry.

The recommendations below (and summarized in Table 6) support a restructured public toilet provision initiative in the City of Toronto. They underscore the need for Toronto to develop a public toilet strategy that evolves out of the collaborative planning process and to uncouple the provision of public toilets from the city’s Co-ordinated Street Furniture Program.

7.1 Recommendation 1: Develop a Public Toilet Strategy

The City of Toronto must develop a public toilet strategy in collaboration with various individuals and agencies responsible for public health and welfare, as well as members of the public. The strategy would establish an aim and objectives, as well as articulate vision and value statements for public toilet provision in Toronto. As well, the strategy would support and facilitate changes to the way public toilets in Toronto are funded and create a framework for future public toilet provision using a diversity of approaches such as Community Toilet Schemes and social enterprise. Furthermore, the City of Toronto should collaborate with other cities that have drafted a public toilet strategy. This collaboration would permit the “transfer of policy tools, structures, and practices,” and promote the establishment of a “communication network” (Stone, 2004, p.547) between city officials. Indeed, Steven Soifer, a professor of social work at the University of Maryland and a co-founder of the American Restroom Association, contends that a

“national potty discourse” is the gateway to reducing the nation’s “toilet deficit” (Soifer, as cited in Au, 2007, n.p.).

7.2 Recommendation 2: Assume Responsibility for Public Toilet Provision

For the company, there was also the maintenance issue, if that’s part of your contract. So that’s why they chose to look at these self-automated, self-cleaning models. You and I might have said that it would be cheaper to put in an attendant, but that was very much the company’s imperative because they were responsible for the maintenance as part of their contract. Astral decided against taking attended toilets because part of the contract is not just that they design ... but they build and they maintain, and they maintain them for 20 years and at the end of the 20 years we assume ownership, so it’s in their best interest to have a model that is manageable. (F. Chapman, personal communication, July 9, 2012)

The City of Toronto must separate the provision of public toilets from the city’s Co-ordinated Street Furniture Program. Because Astral Media has secured a contract with the City of Toronto for the provision of the City’s street furniture, including its APTs, and because Astral does not earn advertising revenue from the public toilet units (Astral does not advertise on the APTs), the incentive for Astral both to provide Toronto with 20 public toilets (the contract permits Astral to “swap” or “cash out”), and to follow up on the condition of existing units, is minimal. Moreover, because Astral Media is responsible for the provision and maintenance of Toronto’s public toilets, with the City involved only in assessments regarding location and hours of operation, there is little accountability to the City regarding the status of the APTs. This is illustrated, for example, by the lack of usage statistics reports from Astral to the City.

The City tends to spend money for something it’s investing in itself. This is an interesting partnership deal where effectively the investment [in Toronto’s street furniture] is Astral’s, not the City’s. The maintenance is Astral’s, not the City’s. On the other hand, there certainly is a public role because the advertising generates the funds for the program. It’s not a direct city investment, which is normally what the city tends to do in these kinds of exercises. (F. Chapman, personal communication, July 9, 2012)

The City of Toronto needs to assume direct investment in the planning, procurement, and maintenance of its public toilets. This can be done, for example, via contracting out the procurement and operation of the public toilets to a facilities management company or, alternatively, Toronto can follow the examples of the city of Edmonton, which engaged an architectural firm to design and build its Whyte Avenue public toilet and of Denver, which engaged an architectural firm to design and build a number of new public toilets and modernize several existing public toilets. Both cities employ City staff for maintenance procedures and security considerations. By assuming responsibility for the planning, procurement, and maintenance of its public toilets, the City of Toronto is at liberty to determine what type of public toilet, for example, traditional stand-alone public toilets in purpose-built buildings, and what model of public toilet provision, for example, Community Toilet Scheme or social enterprise, is best suited to particular areas of the city. As Tom Carrollo, general manager of downtown Portland’s Beardsley Building Development, contended, “Even within the city, one size [of public

toilet] doesn't fit all. You really need a distributed solution" (personal communication, August 7, 2012).

7.3 Recommendation 3: Examine Alternative Avenues of Public Toilet Provision

Because stand-alone—attended or unattended—public toilets tend to be a magnet for criminal and other unwelcome behaviour, alternative avenues of public toilet provision should be considered by the City of Toronto. In the UK, the Community Toilet Scheme, whereby municipal governments work in partnership with local businesses in order to offer the public access to a toilet, could be examined as a new model for public toilet provision in Toronto. As well, the City of Toronto might consider establishing purpose-built social business enterprises that incorporate public toilets. A social business can take the form of, for example, a coffee shop or tourist information kiosk. Because social business enterprises place the community's social and environmental welfare above profit maximization, yet produce revenue sufficient to cover costs, the toilets generate a return on investment. As well, social businesses often employ socially marginalized people, thus contributing to social cohesion and a reduction of inequalities (European Commission, 2012, n.p.).

Public toilets are not just another element of "street furniture." Public toilets are an integral element of social infrastructure and a key component of a strong and functional public realm. The interviews conducted indicate that it is imperative for a city to take a holistic approach to public toilet provision and work together with various individuals and agencies responsible for public health and welfare, as well as members of the public, in determining the best way to implement an inclusive and accessible public toilet program. Furthermore, an appreciation of the attributes of the most effective public toilet strategies can support the creation of a workable and sustainable public toilet policy in Toronto and help inform this city's future public toilet strategy.

Table 6: Recommendations for a Public Toilet Provision Strategy in the City of Toronto

Develop a public toilet strategy in collaboration with various individuals and agencies responsible for public health and welfare, as well as members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an aim and objectives • Articulate vision and value statements • Support and facilitate changes to the way public toilets are funded • Create a framework for future public toilet provision • Collaborate with other cities
Assume responsibility for public toilet provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate the provision of public toilets from the City's Co-ordinated Street Furniture Program • Assume direct investment in the planning, procurement, and maintenance of public toilets
Examine alternative avenues of public toilet provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Toilet Scheme • Purpose-built social business enterprises

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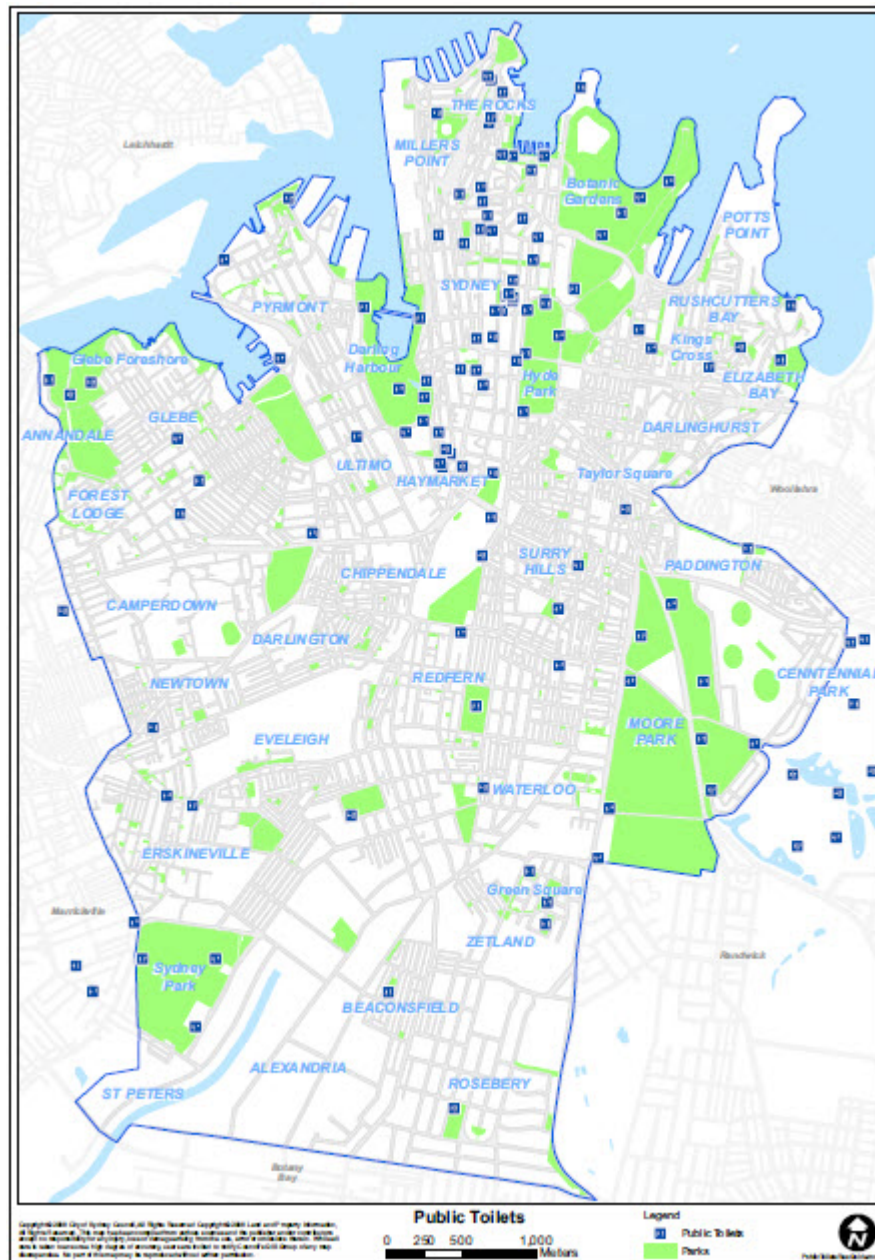
9.0 Appendix: Public Toilet Maps

Map 1: Bedford Borough Council



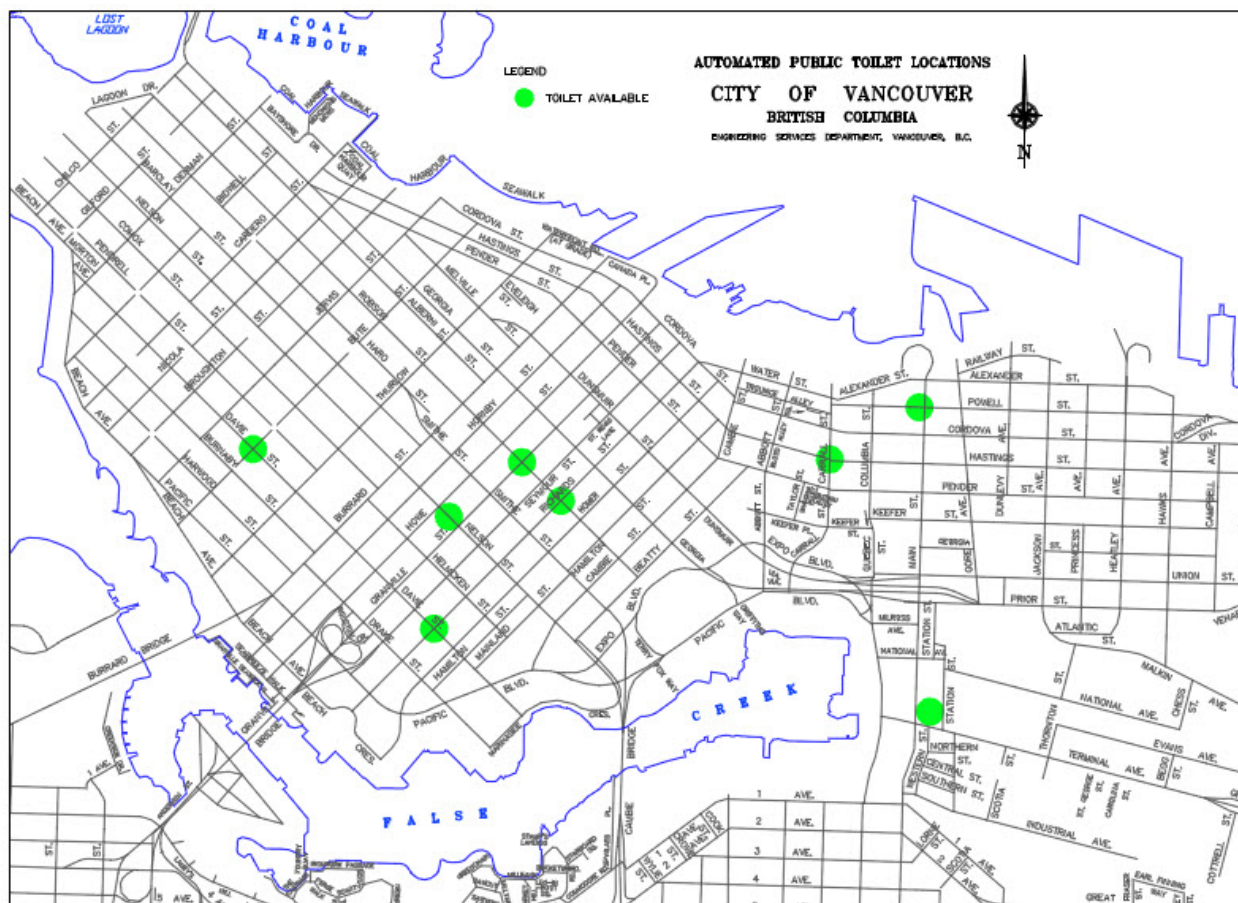
Source: *Public Toilets*, Bedford Borough Council, 2013.

Map 2: City of Sydney, Australia



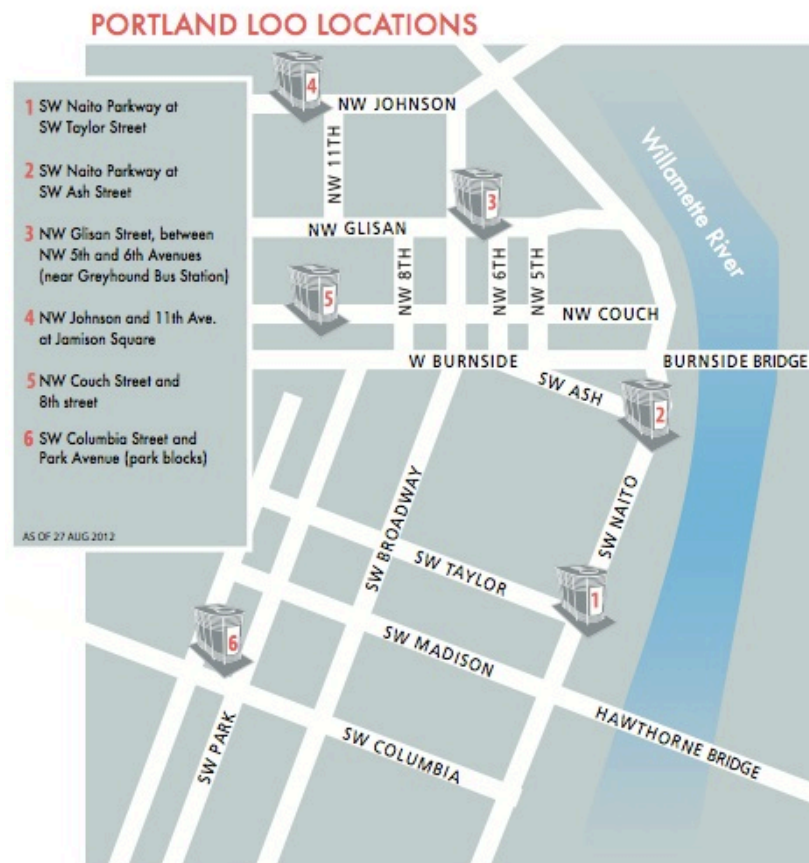
Source: *Public Toilets*, City of Sydney, 2013.

Map 3: City of Vancouver



Source: *Request Benches, Bike Racks, Garbage Cans, Public Toilets and More*, City of Vancouver, 2013.

Map 4: City of Portland, Oregon

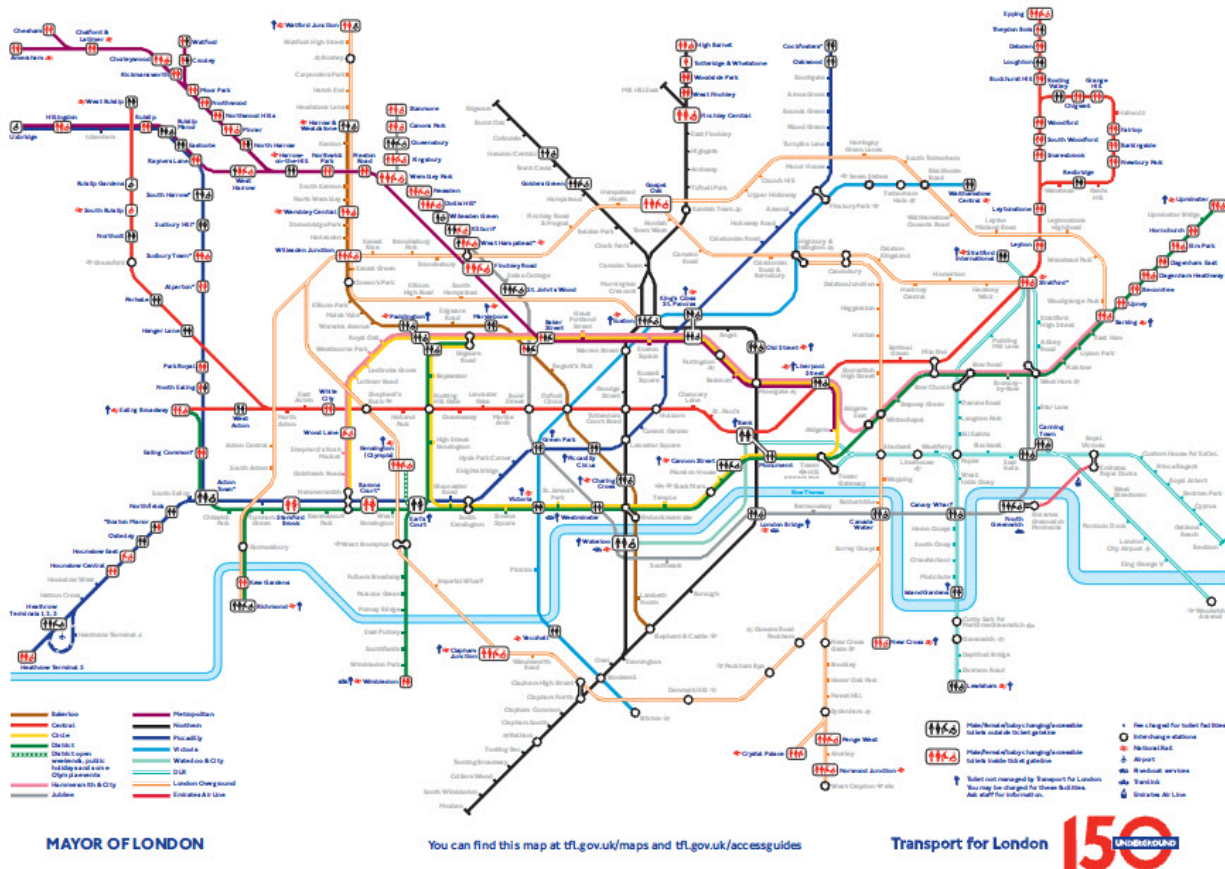


Source: *Portland Toilet Locator*, PHLUSH, 2012.

Map 5: London Tube Toilet Map

Page two of map includes information on:

- Toilets that charge a fee
- Opening hours
- Baby changing facilities
- Locations on non-London Underground, London Overground, and DLR managed toilets



Source: *Transport for London*. (n.d.). Maps.