

Attachment 2

From: Brian Quiring <BQuiring@vernon.ca>

Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 3:14 PM

To: Mayor <Mayor@vernon.ca>; Akbal Mund <AMund@vernon.ca>; Kari Gares <KGares@vernon.ca>; Patti Bridal <PBridal@vernon.ca>; Brian Guy <BGuy@vernon.ca>; Kelly Fehr <KFehr@vernon.ca>; Teresa Durning <TDurning@vernon.ca>

Subject: FW: Downtown Washroom by Nature's Fare

Please see the report from the DVA regarding downtown washrooms.

Brian Quiring (*he/him*)

Councillor, City of Vernon

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From: Keelan Murtagh <keelanm@downtownvernon.com>

Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 1:19 PM

To: Brian Quiring <BQuiring@vernon.ca>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Downtown Washroom by Nature's Fare

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Good afternoon Counselor Quiring,
I hope you are doing well.

As you are aware, the public washroom located downtown Vernon, near Nature's Fare, has posed challenges for surrounding businesses. For several months, the management team at Nature's Fare has kept the Downtown Vernon Association (DVA) informed of ongoing issues that are consistently affecting customers and impacting business.

In response, the DVA reached out to seven other businesses in the area to understand the broader impact of the washroom. Of the seven businesses contacted, six provided feedback. The following is a summary of their feedback. Remarkably, all the businesses held similar opinions.

- There is a consistent group (although not necessarily the same individuals) of people who are unconscious around the unit on a daily basis. This is most prevalent in the mornings; however, throughout the day there are concerns about the well-being and overall state of people 'sleeping' by (or sometimes *in*) the washroom.
 - One underlying belief around the above comment is that the washrooms attract the homeless, and then they stay due to the convenient seating area which is partially hidden.
 - While groups of homeless are not necessarily the issue, there is a perception held by the public that the area is unsafe and has the unfortunate real impact of people feeling unsafe and/or uncomfortable, which deters shopping.

- Occasionally, (and witnessed by the DVA during this particular conversation) street entrenched people attempt to break into the washroom. Causing damage to the unit itself. There is a question surrounding their motivation as witnesses are unsure if the person attempting to gain access is trying to help an OD in progress or if they are trying to use the facilities themselves.
- Despite each business recognizing the need to provide a public washroom, not one believes there has been a benefit to their store since the installation.
- According to the businesses, they have not noticed the public or tourists using the facilities. On the occasion when a customer has asked to use the store's washroom, they are pointed to the public facility and the owner/employee quickly notices the customer being uncomfortable with the idea.
- Unfortunately, due to the volume of unresponsive people near the washroom, businesses have begun reducing their calls to 911. This is partially due to the reporting procedure itself and because it doesn't seem to have an impact on reducing the number of unconscious bodies.

During the past year, the DVA has actively consulted with the Community Safety Office and has conducted a CPTED assessment. Here are some potential solutions arising from that assessment.

Potential solutions;

- Re-orientate the benches to face 30th Ave. versus creating a conversational setting.
- Remove the shrubbery and vegetation to increase visual clarity in the area.
- Relocate the door to face 30th Ave.

Additional ideas suggested by businesses include;

- Have a temporary 'closure' during the abovementioned work. By temporarily removing this service, we may gain insight into a future scenario where the bathroom has been removed completely. While all parties agree this is not the ideal action, and would prefer to take a phased approach to solving these issues, it's recognized a full removal and relocation may become necessary.
- Lock the bathroom and allow surrounding businesses to hold a key to the washroom. This would allow a group management system that may promote customers and the public to use the washrooms as intended.

While no single solution may fully address the complexities of the washroom issues, the DVA is committed to supporting meaningful and proactive measures to alleviate these challenges for our members. We believe that a thoughtful combination of the suggested actions can contribute to a more welcoming environment and achieve the original intention of providing a needed public service.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you would like more specific information on the above.

Have a great time at the conference.

Keelan Murtagh, DES
 Executive Director
 Downtown Vernon Association
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