



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** Public Works and Transportation Committee      **Date:** March 24, 2025  
**From:** Suzanne Bycraft  
Director, Public Works Operations      **File:** 10-6000-01/2025-Vol 01  
**Re:** **2025 National Public Works Week - May 18 to 24, 2025: People, Purpose, Presence**

### Staff Recommendation

That the 2025 in-person event and virtual campaign to recognize National Public Works Week, as outlined in the staff report titled “2025 National Public Works Week - May 18 to 24, 2025: People, Purpose, Presence”, dated March 24, 2025, from the Director, Public Works Operations, be received for information.

Suzanne Bycraft  
Director, Public Works Operations  
(604-233-3338)

Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
<b>ROUTED TO:</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>
Parks Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW</b>	<b>INITIALS:</b>	<b>APPROVED BY CAO</b>

## Staff Report

### Origin

This report presents the City's annual program activities and awareness campaign in support of National Public Works Week being recognized May 18 to 24, 2025 with this year's theme of "People, Purpose, Presence". This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #1 Proactive in Stakeholder and Civic Engagement:

*Proactive stakeholder and civic engagement to foster understanding and involvement and advance Richmond's interests.*

*1.3 Increase the reach of communication and engagement efforts to connect with Richmond's diverse community.*

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #6 A Vibrant, Resilient and Active Community:

*Vibrant, resilient and active communities supported by a wide variety of opportunities to get involved, build relationships and access resources.*

*6.3 Foster intercultural harmony, community belonging, and social connections.*

### Analysis

The Canadian National Public Works Association's annual National Public Works Week is from May 18 to 24, 2025. Traditionally, the City marked this week with in-person events aimed at recognizing the contributions of Public Works staff and fostering community engagement. In 2021, a virtual campaign component was added.

In celebration of the 2025 National Public Works Week, the City will continue to incorporate in-person events along with a virtual campaign. Staff will host two educational events at the Works Yard for Richmond students and the public. These events will feature engineering exhibits, interactive stations and displays of public works and parks equipment.

Additionally, the City will promote National Public Works Week with a virtual campaign, similar to the strategy developed during the pandemic. The campaign will include social media content, community engagement highlights and an interactive map of capital projects throughout the City.

Both in-person and virtual campaigns are outlined in this report.

Each May, National Public Works Week honours individuals committed to serving their communities through careers in public works. The week aims to engage and educate the public about the vital role of public works in their everyday lives. The City recognizes National Public Works Week through a proclamation outlining the following areas:

- Public Works services provided in the community are an integral part of Richmond citizens' everyday lives;
- the support of an understanding and informed citizenry is vital to the efficient operation of Public Works systems, parks services and programs such as water, sewer, roads, public buildings, recycling and solid waste collection;
- the health, safety and comfort of this community greatly depend on these facilities and services;
- the quality and effectiveness of these facilities, as well as their planning, design and construction, is vitally dependent upon the efforts and skills of Public Works officials; and
- the efficiency of qualified and dedicated personnel who staff the Public Works Departments is materially influenced by the people's attitude and understanding of the importance of the work they perform.

### 2025 Campaign Theme and Components

This year's National Public Works Week theme is "People, Purpose, Presence". The City's 2025 campaign will highlight how Public Works staff exemplify this theme by operating, maintaining and upgrading City infrastructure; promoting environmental stewardship through initiatives like water conservation and recycling programs; conducting community engagement events and programs; preparing for emergencies and extreme weather events; and adopting innovation and technology for efficient service delivery.

The City will recognize National Public Works Week in two phases: by hosting two in-person events that will take place during the week of May 4 and by producing a virtual campaign that will launch on May 18 and will continue for the duration of National Public Works Week.

### In-Person Events

#### *Project WET*

Project WET, the City's annual water education program developed in partnership with the Richmond School District, will be held on May 6 and 7. The program will be presented to eight elementary school classes, with approximately 215 students and teachers expected to attend. This interactive program teaches elementary school students the importance of water consumption, conservation, quality and supply. Students will also learn about the City's emergency water treatment trailer, recycling programs, dikes, pump stations, and sanitary sewers. This event serves to educate younger generations and establish a relationship between the City and its future leaders.

#### *Public Works Open House*

The annual Public Works Open House will take place on Saturday, May 10, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Works Yard. The free event offers residents the chance to engage with City staff, gaining insight into their roles and the programs they oversee. Attendees can also explore various booths, participate in interactive displays, eat at one of the local food vendor trucks, and enjoy live entertainment.

Our most popular station, *Big Dig*, featuring mini-excavators, is expanding. We are increasing the number of mini-excavators from three to five. In addition to the mini-excavators, we now have two static excavators available for photo opportunities, allowing children to strike a pose on their favourite construction vehicle. To alleviate long lines, we have implemented a "Crew Pass" system that designates time slots for Crew Pass ticket holders. These passes will be issued at specific times throughout the event to ensure everyone has a fair chance to experience Big Dig.

Favourites such as the cement-building zone, Kidstruction, Sign Shop paint station, Big Blue Blocks imagination station, crafts, games, play areas, nature and environmental sustainability displays and Richmond Fire-Rescue and emergency displays will return this year. To ensure traffic flows smoothly and minimize interruptions, there will be traffic control personnel working on Lynas Lane from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Additional parking will be available at four nearby parking lots: the Austria Vancouver Club, Blair Elementary School, JN Burnett Secondary School and Thompson Elementary School. Shuttles will be provided between the overflow parking lot at Burnett Secondary and the Works Yard during the event. Attendees will also be encouraged to take public transit, carpool or ride bikes or scooters.

This event relies on numerous staff at the Works Yard, other areas across the organization, and volunteers to deliver a well-coordinated event. In 2024, over 280 staff volunteered to successfully deliver the event.

### Virtual Campaign

#### *Social Media*

The public will be invited to celebrate this year's National Public Works Week by visiting the City's social media channels daily from May 18 to May 24. The channels will feature pictures and videos of different Public Works staff and services including a ditch rehabilitation project, a student visit to a drainage pump station, crews working on soil compacting for a sanitary trench, and finally an aerial view of the Recycling Depot.

#### *Video: "National Public Works Week 2025: Purpose"*

For National Public Works Week (NPWW), the City is creating a short video highlighting the "Purpose" aspect of this year's theme: *People, Purpose, and Presence* will be created. This video will feature short interviews with Public Works staff, capturing their perspectives on what "purpose" means to them in their roles at the City. By compiling these candid insights, the goal is to showcase the dedication, impact and essential contributions of Public Works professionals, while also promoting awareness and appreciation of their work within the community.

#### *Interactive Article: Power washing our Pipes:*

This article, Attachment 1, outlines how Richmond maintains high-quality drinking water through unidirectional flushing, a process that power washes pipes to remove contaminants and extend infrastructure lifespan. Crews work overnight to minimize disruption, ensuring clean, safe water while preventing costly pipe deterioration. This proactive maintenance keeps Richmond's water system reliable and efficient.

*Interactive Map*

A link to the “2025 Capital Projects Highlights: Engineering and Public Works” interactive map will be included in the promotion page for National Public Works Week. The map shows planned or ongoing projects for the year and provides information on each project.

Together, these initiatives emphasize the connection between Public Works and the community, demonstrating the department’s commitment to service, education and infrastructure excellence. By engaging residents through informative and engaging content, we continue to build awareness and appreciation for the essential work that keeps Richmond thriving. These efforts embody key Richmond core values, People and Excellence, by highlighting the dedication of our staff, the high standards of service we uphold, the leadership in proactive maintenance, the teamwork that drives our success, and the Innovative approaches we take to enhance the City's infrastructure and quality of life.

**Financial Impact**

Costs associated with this event include items such as materials, equipment, and other ancillary costs, funded within current departmental budgets and/or by external parties who participate in the event.

**Conclusion**

The Canadian National Public Works Association’s annual National Public Works Week is from May 18 to 24, 2025, and the City plays an active role in celebrating it. Two in-person events and a virtual campaign will be held to recognize and highlight the people who provide, operate and maintain the infrastructure services known as public works. The Public Works Open House highlight event will take place on Saturday, May 10, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The second event, Project WET will be held over two days on May 6 and 7. Both of these events will be held at the Public Works Yard. Cities across Canada participate by raising awareness of public works contributions and encourage community support for these dedicated employees who consistently improve the quality of life for residents.



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Att. 1: “Power Washing our Pipes” article

# Power washing our PIPES

When Richmond residents turn on their taps, they're getting clean, fresh, world class water thanks in large part to the efforts of City workers who power wash the pipes using a practice called unidirectional flushing.

## WHAT IS UNIDIRECTIONAL FLUSHING?

- Unidirectional flushing is a best practice used by local governments as part of regular maintenance to "power wash" pipes by forcing water in a single direction through a specific route by closing or opening valves in a strategic way.
- Forcing the water in a single direction increases the velocity of the water flow and ensures that the insides of the pipes are being scoured while the water is safely flushed out of the watermain network.
- The water is then drained through hydrants at the end of the flushing sequence to remove the debris from the system.
- Cleaning pipes is important because it prevents bacterial growth and removes sediment – the tiny solids that occur naturally in water and gradually build up on the bottom of the watermain.
- Staff control the flow of water during flushing. When practical, the water that is flushed is captured to be reused for irrigation.

THE SHORT  
EXPLANATION FOR  
UNIDIRECTIONAL  
FLUSHING:

A LOT OF  
WATER AND A  
LOT OF PRESSURE  
EQUALS CLEAN  
PIPES AND  
SAFE DRINKING  
WATER.





Annual watermain flushing enhances drinking water quality.

But it's even more complex than that, says Todd Smithers, a supervisor in Richmond's Water Services, Hydrant and Valves Division, who explains that scheduling and conducting the work must take into account safety for workers, road users and residents as well as potential disruption for homes and businesses while addressing the overarching issue: water quality.

And it's no small job, since [Richmond has more than 600 km of watermains that deliver more than 30 million cubic metres of water to customers each year.](#)

The work is done once a year at night to minimize disruption, explains Smithers, a City employee since 1997, with crews working 10-hour shifts. The target is for each crew member to cover two kilometres per shift, and they typically leapfrog one another, moving from hydrant to hydrant along the specified route as clean water at pressures up to 80 pounds per square inch (PSI) pushes out contaminants such as biofilm and organic matter. They flush the water across roads and into ditches, and diffusers are used to mitigate the pressure while temporary berms can be used to protect properties.

It takes between five and eight weeks to complete, and throughout this process, water at each hydrant is tested for cleanliness and turbidity (that refers to suspended particles in the water, which result in cloudy water) before and after each flush to ensure the end users – residents, businesses, institutions – get the safest possible water.

"We always have a good source of high-quality water from Metro Vancouver, and we're constantly flushing the pipes to help maintain that water quality for our residents so they don't have to worry about it," says Derek Gardner, another veteran of Richmond's water staff. "Our whole department, we take pride in that."

He also notes the steps taken to protect workers and the public while the work is underway, from lights to traffic control. "It's safety first all the time."

Hydrant mechanic Dylan McQuistin, who has been with the City for eight years, says many water customers don't understand what crews are doing late at night. "Some people think we're wasting water but the reality is, we're cleaning out the entire pipe. It ends up in a huge water quality improvement in the long run."

It makes financial sense, too, says Smithers. If sediment is allowed to build up in pipes, it would decrease capacity, resulting in the need to upsize the pipes more often, and could also cause the pipes to deteriorate more quickly. "Without flushing, our mains wouldn't last as long," he says. "So, not only is it ensuring the mains last longer, by doing this maintenance, the water quality is extremely high. And it keeps all of that debris from showing up in tap water."

"It's money well spent. The numbers don't lie. We know how good our system is with all the testing we do."

And it's a group effort, says Carly Smith, a 19-year Richmond employee. "It takes

a lot of leadership and just being a team. Our crews thrive on working together, and it makes everything go smoother. It helps us cover more ground."

Deborah Prystay, Richmond Water Services Project Manager, echoes Smith's comments and applauds the work of water crews.

"They're a very dedicated crew, and they are passionate about what we do in Water Services," she says. "By working through the night, they not only ensure we have high-quality drinking water, they also help to minimize impacts on our residents."

Adds Prystay: "They understand the importance of the program and the water we deliver to Richmond residents."

*The end result of late nights, teams working together and the power of water at high velocity is a network of clean pipes that deliver safe, reliable and high-quality drinking water to Richmond residents.*

