

BUSINESS

**LA
PRESSE**

PME Innovation

Public toilets that self-clean whenever you want



PHOTO ALAIN ROBERGE, THE PRESS

Hanging on the wall, the bowl and sink clear the floor for automatic cleaning.

We would dream of it at home. The Urben Blu outdoor public toilet automatically cleans its bowl with each use and washes its floor at intervals of 5 to 20 visits, depending on its programming.

Updated October 9



MARC TISON
THE PRESS



As soon as it lands in an urban park, this smart toilet is truly connected: to the water distribution network, to the sanitary network and to the wireless network. And no, there is no “e” in the expression “at will”.

Innovation

Smart and vandal-resistant, the Urben Blu outdoor toilet looks like a small pavilion, but it is entirely factory-made.



PHOTO ALAIN ROBERGE, THE PRESS

Urban Blu manufactures intelligent, self-cleaning public toilets in small buildings delivered ready to plug in.

It inflicts a scouring and recurring cleaning, fully automated, which leaves it immaculate in 45 seconds, ready for a new and eager use. Heated and carefully insulated, the cabinet easily survives the harshest winters.

Who?

Urban Blu was founded in 2010 by Marcel Paré, an entrepreneur who wanted to introduce the principle of European-style self-cleaning toilets to the country. Faced with the inability of foreign components to withstand our winters, he set about designing a

truly Quebec self-cleaning toilet, therefore resistant to the cold. Businessman Alain Bolduc joined him after a convincing visit to the company at the end of the 2010s.



PHOTO ALAIN ROBERGE, THE PRESS

Alain Bolduc, vice-president of sales and co-shareholder, Urben Blu

« We quickly realized that it was not made for the North American climate and we decided to completely redo the toilet and build it according to North American standards. All the parts we use inside our building are 100% Canadian and the building is 100% manufactured here, in Quebec, in Boisbriand. »

— Alain Bolduc, vice-president of sales and co-shareholder of Urben Blu

How Urban Blu cleans himself

The Urban Blu public toilet is offered with one or two toilets. The simple version measures approximately 9 ft by 12 ft (2.8 m by 3.6 m), with a quarter of its surface area occupied by a small mechanical room, out of reach of users.



PHOTO ALAIN ROBERGE, THE PRESS

The mechanical room brings together all the equipment and the electronic control module, out of reach of users.

The pavilion is built in the factory on a 30 cm thick concrete slab, the floor of which is heated. The self-supporting galvanized steel structure is lined with insulation. Its exterior covering can be personalized to the customer's liking.

Automated

“All the interior walls are made of ultra-resistant concrete that we manufacture in our factory,” says Alain Bolduc.

Its fiber-reinforced concrete sink is equipped with three automatic contactless functions: a soap dispenser, a faucet and a hand dryer.

The stainless steel trash can, hidden by the concrete wall, only reveals its circular opening. Toilet paper is dispensed sheet by sheet through a wall outlet.

Cleaning and disinfection of the bowl, suspended from the wall, is carried out automatically after each use. Its seat is then dried by a powerful fan, placed in the mechanical room, which projects a blade of air onto its surface.

After a certain number of uses, set by the manager, six nozzles placed around the periphery of the floor project vigorous jets of water onto its surface. The water flows towards a long drain which stretches at the base of a wall. The surface is dried by the heat released by the floor.

A large LED display panel, next to the entrance door, informs the user about the use and occupancy of the cabinet, locked during cleaning.

Remote control and management

Cleaning cycles, opening hours and lighting are controlled by an electronic module, which can be managed remotely on a cell phone, tablet or computer.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY URBEN BLU

A recent installation at Parc des Rapides, in Montreal

“The City can connect directly to this control for all the functionalities and to have statistics on toilet use,” explains Alain Bolduc.

A new function notifies the manager by email when the soap or toilet paper level is low.

The market

The price of the single pavilion is around \$200,000.

“There is currently no one in North America who does what we do,” maintains Alain Bolduc.

“Moreover, we have just signed an agreement with a large American distributor who, according to him, had been looking for a product like ours for 30 years. We also have a distributor who takes care of the Western provinces. »

So far, the company has delivered around a hundred toilets to Quebec, Ontario and the United States.

« We have around 25 toilets in our order book, which we are currently producing. Our annual production can reach 50 units in our current infrastructure. »

— Alain Bolduc, vice-president of sales and co-shareholder of Urben Blu

The future

Since the retirement of Marcel Paré, Urben Blu has been owned by Alain Bolduc, Pierre Gendron and Sébastien Riopelle. The company has around thirty employees, including around twenty in production.

“Today, we have five representatives, we cover the United States and Canada and we make 10 to 15 presentations to new clients every week,” says Alain Bolduc.

In the United States, the Urben Blu self-cleaning toilet is of particular interest to oil companies, which want to offer clean sanitary facilities at their truck stops.

Urben Blu is currently working with the Quebec company Solère to add a solar battery system to its toilets, which would take over in the event of a breakdown or make them entirely autonomous.

[Visit the Urben Blu website](#)

© La Presse Inc. Tous droits réservés.