



Policy Overview

Policy:	Civil Marriage Ceremony
Effective:	April 8, 2025
Revised:	N/A
Applicable to:	All Employees and Applicants

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Policy establishes guidelines to standardize the City of Port Colborne ("City") performance of civil marriage ceremonies.
- 1.2. These guidelines are intended to (1) inform Applicants of what they can expect from their Civil Marriage Ceremony, and (2) create an evolving reference document for staff.
- 1.3. This policy is intended to supplement by-law No. 7158/100/23 which authorizes and regulates civil marriage ceremonies. In the event of any conflict, the by-law's provisions shall prevail.

2. Definitions

"Applicant" means an individual applying to the City to be married through a Civil Marriage Ceremony.

"Civil Marriage Ceremony" means a non-religious, legal marriage ceremony officiated by an Ontario Judge, Justice of the Peace or a Municipal Clerk under the authority of a marriage licence and in accordance with the Marriage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.3 ("the Act").

"City" means The Corporation of the City of Port Colborne.

"City Clerk" means the City Clerk of the City of Port Colborne or designate.

"Clerk's Division" means the City Clerk and staff members who report to the City Clerk of the City of Port Colborne.

"CMCQ" means Civil Marriage Ceremony Questionnaire

"Officiant" is a person who solemnizes a Civil Marriage Ceremony.

3. Authority

- 3.1. Ontario Regulation 285/04 under the *Marriage Act* states that the Clerk of a local municipality is authorized to solemnize marriages under the authority of a licence.



- 3.2. Council has adopted a by-law authorizing the solemnization of marriages throughout the City.

4. Eligible Applicants

- 4.1. Applicants with a valid Ontario marriage licence may apply to be married through a Civil Marriage Ceremony officiated by an Officiant at the City of Port Colborne.

5. Role of Marriage License

- 5.1. A valid Ontario marriage license is required for a Civil Marriage Ceremony. A marriage license is only valid for ninety (90) days from the date of issuance.
- 5.2. A marriage license can be applied for and obtained from the Clerk's Division at City Hall between the hours of 8:30 am and 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

6. Fees

- 6.1. There is a fee for a marriage license and a separate fee for the Civil Marriage Ceremony.
- 6.2. These fees are established by the City's Fees and Charges By-law and can be found on the City's website.
- 6.3. Part of the Civil Marriage Ceremony fee is a non-refundable deposit of \$100 that is required to secure the date and time.
- 6.4. The remainder of the fee may be paid on or before the date of the ceremony.

7. Dates and Times

- 7.1. A ceremony booking is required for a Civil Marriage Ceremony.
- 7.2. Ceremonies are held between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday. However, dates and times are conditional on the availability of Officiants
- 7.3. After hours civil marriage ceremonies can be booked on a case-by-case basis; this is subject to availability and an additional fee.

8. Application Process

- 8.1. The Applicants are required to obtain a valid Ontario Marriage Licence before booking a Civil Marriage Ceremony. A Marriage Licence may be obtained from the City of Port Colborne or any municipality in Ontario.



- 8.2.** The Clerk's Division staff will assist the Applicants in obtaining a Marriage Licence from the City of Port Colborne, if required, only if the Applicants are eligible and all requirements are met.
- 8.3.** If presented with a valid Marriage Licence from another Ontario municipality, staff will check for the availability of an Officiant according to the proposed date of marriage listed on the Marriage Licence.
- 8.4.** The Clerk's Division Staff will assist the Applicants in booking a Civil Marriage Ceremony.
- 8.5.** An appointment will only be confirmed once:
 - 8.5.1.** An Officiant is available for the selected event date; and
 - 8.5.2.** The non-refundable deposit is paid to secure the event date.
- 8.6.** Applicants are required to complete a Civil Marriage Ceremony Questionnaire once the appointment has been confirmed by Clerk's Division Staff. If this is not possible, the CMCQ can be returned to the Clerk's Division Staff at least 7 days before the event.
- 8.7.** The CMCQ requires Applicants to provide information regarding:
 - 8.7.1.** Their witnesses.
 - 8.7.2.** The number of guests.
 - 8.7.3.** If there will be any personalized vows.
 - 8.7.4.** If the ceremony will include an exchange of a kiss/embrace.
 - 8.7.5.** If any Applicants are being given away.
 - 8.7.6.** If there will be any photographs or videos.
 - 8.7.7.** If there are any decoration requests.
 - 8.7.8.** If there are any music requests.
 - 8.7.9.** If the Applicants are comfortable with the presence of other City Staff in addition to the Officiant for educational purposes.



9. Pre-Consultation Meeting / Rehearsal

- 9.1. The CMCQ is reviewed by the City Clerk/Deputy Clerk.
- 9.2. The City Clerk/Deputy Clerk will follow up with Applicants by email or phone at least one week in advance of the booking to discuss the script and details of the ceremony.
- 9.3. Rehearsals shall not be permitted unless approved by the City Clerk.

10. Ceremony Officials

- 10.1. Any of the following individuals may act as an Officiant:
 - 10.1.1. City Clerk
 - 10.1.2. City Staff appointed by the City Clerk to solemnize civil marriage ceremonies on behalf of the City, provided their appointment has been approved by the Office of the Registrar General.
- 10.2. Applicants shall not be guaranteed the right to select the Officiant for their ceremony.

11. Witnesses

- 11.1. As required by *Ontario Regulation 302/05*, two witnesses must be present during the ceremony.
- 11.2. The witnesses will be required to provide their names, addresses, and a valid piece of government photo ID.
- 11.3. The witnesses must be provided by the Applicants.
- 11.4. It is recommended that witnesses be 14 years of age or older as they may be relied upon to testify to the ceremony's occurrence.

12. Guests and Attendees

- 12.1. The number of guests cannot exceed the capacity of the location. These capacities are noted in Section 13.
- 12.2. Virtual guests are permitted, but the City will not be responsible for administering the required technology. The Applicants are responsible for arranging all aspects of virtual attendance of guests.



13. Civil Ceremony Location

13.1. Civil marriage ceremonies may be held at the following City locations (see appendix B):

13.1.1. Council Chambers, on the third floor of City Hall at 66 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne, ON, L3K 3C8

13.1.2. Roselawn Centre, 296 Fielden Avenue, Port Colborne, ON, L3K 4T6

13.1.3. Sugarloaf Marina Pavilion, 3 Marina Drive, Port Colborne, ON, L3K 6C6

13.2. As required under the *Marriage Act*, virtual marriages or the virtual attendance of witnesses are not permitted.

13.3. The location booking for ceremonies shall be one (1) hour.

14. Content of Ceremony

14.1. Civil marriage ceremonies shall be conducted in English.

14.1.1. Applicants will be required to bring an Interpreter or translator in the event they do not speak English and require language assistance. This will be at the expense of the Applicants.

14.1.2. The interpreter cannot be one of the witnesses.

14.1.3. Interpreters will be required to sign an affidavit, provided by the Clerk's Division. This form will be subject to the Commissioner of Oath fee.

14.2. All civil marriage ceremonies shall be non-religious and non-denominational.

14.3. Civil marriage ceremonies may contain personal vows and readings provided they are submitted with the CMCQ and approved by the City Clerk in advance.

14.4. Ceremonies should be kept to less than thirty (30) minutes.

15. Conduct Before and During Ceremony

15.1. Applicants and witnesses are required to show Valid Photo Identification prior to the civil ceremony starting.

15.2. Applicants shall arrive at the location where the Civil Ceremony is being held fifteen (15) minutes before the appointment time.



- 15.3.** Applicants must pay the remaining balance for the ceremony at City Hall no later than 30 minutes prior to the start of the ceremony. This allows for the processing of the payment. If paying before the ceremony, the Applicants are required to produce the receipt of this payment to the Officiant.
- 15.4.** If the Officiant believes that alcohol, stimulants, or other intoxicants have been used by the Applicants or their witnesses, the Civil Marriage Ceremony shall not proceed.
- 15.5.** The Applicants shall be responsible for the conduct of their guests and witnesses and shall ensure their presence does not interfere with the execution of the ceremony.
- 15.6.** Pictures and videos are permitted throughout the ceremony provided they do not disrupt the ceremony.

16. Permitted Accessories During Ceremony

- 16.1.** Music shall only be permitted if requested on the CMCQ and approved by the City Clerk in advance.
- 16.2.** Small items such as a bouquet of flowers or corsage are acceptable during the ceremony.
- 16.3.** Items such as confetti, rice, bubbles, candles, incense, or similar items are not permitted at the ceremony location.
- 16.4.** Tasteful and non-intrusive decorations may be permitted provided they have been requested on the CMCQ and approved by the City Clerk in advance. The Applicants shall be responsible for setting up and taking down the decorations within the time frame of the location booking.

17. Cancellation

- 17.1.** If Applicants can no longer attend their confirmed booking, they must notify the Clerk's Division in writing as soon as possible to cancel their booking.
- 17.2.** If the booking is cancelled prior to the booking time, the individual(s) who paid the refundable portion of the fee shall be refunded that amount. The non-refundable deposit portion of the fee shall not be refunded.
- 17.3.** A minimum of 48 hours notice of cancellation of a Civil Marriage Ceremony is required to receive a refund, less the \$100 non-refundable fee. If cancellation is received less than 48 hours in advance of a scheduled Civil Marriage Ceremony, no refund will be issued.



APPENDIX A: Checklist for Applicants

APPOINTMENT, FEES, LICENCE

- ✓ Contact the Clerk's Office at least two weeks in advance of your desired date to book and confirm your preferred date and time.
- ✓ Make arrangements for two (2) witnesses.
- ✓ Complete the Civil Marriage Ceremony Questionnaire in-person at time of booking.
- ✓ Obtain a valid marriage licence in Ontario prior to your ceremony (valid for ninety (90) days from issuance) and bring it to your ceremony.
- ✓ Arrive at Civil Ceremony location at least 15 minutes before the ceremony. Please arrive at City Hall no later than 30 minutes prior to the ceremony if you still need to pay a balance of the fee.
- ✓ Ensure all Applicants and witnesses have valid photo ID.
- ✓ ***Approximately 6-8 weeks following your Civil Marriage Ceremony, apply for your Marriage Certificate through Service Ontario.***

APPENDIX B: LOCATIONS

Figure A: Council Chambers



Figure B: Roselawn





Figure C: Pavilion at Sugarloaf Marina

