



Subject: Grain Terminal Public Engagement Update

To: Council

From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Report Number: 2025-94

Meeting Date: April 22, 2025

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Officer Report 2025-93 be received; and

That Council direct staff to continue working with subject matter experts in the field to assess and identify viable future tenants for the Port Colborne Grain Terminal.

Purpose:

This report provides Council with a comprehensive summary of public engagement activities and feedback gathered between February 26 and March 21, 2025, regarding the future of the Port Colborne Grain Terminal.

It also recommends that Council direct staff to continue working with subject matter experts in the field to assess and identify viable future tenants for the Port Colborne Grain Terminal.

Background:

On February 11, 2025, Council considered report 2025-30 regarding an update on the future of the Port Colborne Grain Terminal. The report also included a proposed community engagement plan aimed at gathering feedback from the public to help identify options and inform future decision making about the Grain Terminal. At that meeting, Council requested that staff report back with a summary of results received from the public during the month of April. This report provides a summary of the engagement activities and feedback received from the public between February 26 and March 21, 2025.

Overall, the engagement plan aimed to gather feedback from the community through a brief online and paper-based survey, and two drop-in style open houses. The plan sought input from the community about the future use of the Grain Terminal.

To ensure Port Colborne residents and other users of the Grain Terminal were aware of the opportunity to provide feedback in a way that worked best for them. The plan included:

1. Online survey
2. Paper survey
3. In-person open houses

The detailed results and findings from each of these activities are provided in Appendix A of this report. In the interest of transparency, a full list of open-ended responses received in both the online and paper surveys will be posted on

www.portcolborne.ca/GrainTerminal

Discussion:

Public engagement activities related to the future of the Port Colborne Grain Terminal began on February 26, 2025.

Quick stats about the engagement activities to date:

- 549 surveys were completed (515 online and 34 paper)
 - 646 open-field comments to analyze and categorize
 - Average time to complete the survey: 8 minutes (online survey)
 - Estimated completion rate: 80%
- 94 people attended the in-person open houses

Detailed results from the survey and a summary of feedback collected during the open houses is available in Appendix A of this report.

Overall, feedback received indicated that a significant portion of the community supports maintaining the grain terminal as an operational facility. Over half of respondents (55%) reported being either extremely or very familiar with the terminal, and a strong majority (80%) believe that it contributes meaningfully to Port Colborne's culture and character. Additionally, 52% of participants indicated that it is extremely or very important for the terminal to resume operations, while 62% expressed support for finding a new tenant and re-leasing the site.

Opinions were more mixed when it came to redeveloping the property. About 53% support working with a private company if the terminal were demolished for commercial or industrial use. Support was lower for using the site as a public space – 40% would support a private partnership for this purpose, and 44% would support private funding to

help develop a public space there. However, very few respondents supported raising property taxes to fund any changes. Only 5 to 9% were in favour of tax increases for demolishing the terminal or developing the site, whether for public or commercial use.

Internal Consultations:

City staff from Economic Development, Strategic Projects, Public Works, Corporate Services, and Corporate Communications have been working together on transitional issues related to the grain terminal property including, a process to solicit investor interest; implementing a public engagement plan; obtaining studies and assessments for the building and dock wall; and assisting with day-to-day operations, maintenance, and security.

Financial Implications:

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report. Current financial topics related to the grain terminal include:

- The building has \$2 million dollars worth of liabilities to remediate hazardous substances within the building;
 - An independent Building Condition Assessment completed in January 2024 identified \$6.2 million in capital expenditures and maintenance required to maintain the property and building in a state of good repair;
 - One major capital expense is a roof replacement at an estimated cost of \$500,000;
 - Based on estimates obtained by staff and external parties, the cost of demolishing the grain terminal building is approximately \$10 million;
 - There are operating costs to maintain the building while it remains unoccupied;
 - The City has lease agreements with telecommunications companies who have towers and transmitters on the grain terminal property and building. These leases generate about \$21,000 annually.
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Public Engagement:

This report provides a detailed summary of the public engagement campaign aimed at gathering feedback from residents about the future of the Port Colborne Grain Terminal. It includes results received between February 26, 2025 and March 21, 2025.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
 - Economic Prosperity
 - Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure
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Conclusion:

Given the strong community interest in maintaining the Port Colborne Grain Terminal as a functional and historically significant asset, as well as the public's preference for re-leasing the site to a viable tenant, staff recommend continuing efforts to explore feasible operational uses of the facility. Continued collaboration with subject matter experts will ensure that future decisions are informed, practical, and aligned with both community priorities and the City's strategic goals.

Appendices:

- a. Port Colborne Grain Terminal Public Engagement Results
- b. Port Colborne Grain Terminal Public Engagement Presentation

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.