



Subject: Communities in Bloom
To: Council
From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Report Number: 2023-74

Meeting Date: April 25, 2023

Recommendation:

That Office of the Chief Administrative Officer Report 2023-74 be received; and
That Council approve the City of Port Colborne's participation in the 2024 Ontario Provincial Edition of Communities in Bloom.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the City of Port Colborne not participate in this year's Communities in Bloom because of insufficient time for effective planning and preparation. A request that Council approve the City's participation in the 2024 Ontario Provincial Edition is proposed as an alternative option.

Background:

Martin Quinn, Chair, Communities in Bloom Ontario, sent a letter to the City of Port Colborne, inviting the community to participate in the 2023 edition of their friendly competition. This letter was included as correspondence in the agenda of the March 28th Council meeting.

Communities in Bloom (CiB) is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization committed to fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility, and beautification through community participation. Communities compete against others in their province and in their respective population category with respect to six program criteria: a) community appearance, b) environmental action, c) heritage conservation, d) tree management, e) landscape, and f) plant and floral displays.

This summer, trained volunteer judges will evaluate the participating communities on the six program criteria and award a bloom rating from 1 to 5 (5 being the highest rating). These communities will be presented with their bloom rating and a certificate at an awards ceremony in the fall. Up to two communities from each province will be invited to participate in the national edition of the program, which is to be held the following year.

Discussion:

Staff are fully supportive of registering the City as a participant in the provincial edition of Communities in Bloom (CiB). However, given the date that the invitation was presented to Council, the date of this report, and the unknown date for when the City would be judged this summer, staff believe there isn't enough preparation time to make the submission of high enough quality that would result in a high bloom rating for Port Colborne.

CiB program materials recommend forming a local committee to involve the community (e.g., residents/citizens, groups/organizations, and businesses), spread awareness, and mobilize efforts to enhance municipal, residential, commercial, and institutional green spaces. Once more, staff agree that having a longer period of time to fully plan and prepare for the competition would better position the community to excel in each of the six program areas (or criteria).

Therefore, staff recommend that the City decline to participate this year and instead register for the 2024 Ontario Provincial Edition.

Internal Consultations:

The recommendations in this report were arrived at after consulting the Manager of Corporate Communications, Manager of Road & Parks Operations, and Manager of Strategic Initiatives.

Financial Implications:

Presuming that the fee structure for next year remains the same, there will be a \$700 registration fee to participate in the 2024 competition. Additional costs would be incurred for the judges' accommodations, transportation, as well as to attend the provincial awards ceremony. All of these costs can be paid from the Economic Development and Tourism Services 2024 operating budget.

CiB program materials recommend allocating some financial resources to spread awareness, engage the community, honour local volunteers/participants, and prepare

for the judges' visit. Staff are confident that there will be sufficient means within the 2024 operating budgets of different departments/divisions to share in the minimal costs of achieving these four objectives.

Public Engagement:

In anticipation of participating in the 2024 competition, a local committee will be formed that represents a diverse cross-section of community members and groups, and spreads awareness to earn broader community support and boost feelings of civic pride.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

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

- City-Wide Investments in Infrastructure and Recreational/Cultural Spaces
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Conclusion:

This report requests Council's approval to have the City of Port Colborne compete in the 2024 Ontario Provincial Edition of Communities in Bloom (CiB). Staff look forward to this initiative as a unique opportunity to involve the community and gather their support, spread awareness about the importance of environmental action and heritage conservation, and finally as a way to enhance Port Colborne's parks and green spaces.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Higginbotham
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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.