



**SUBJECT: Travel to Itabashi, Japan to commemorate 35 years of twinning**

**TO: Committee of the Whole**

**FROM: Office of the City Clerk**

Report Number: CL-17-24

Wards Affected: None

Date to Committee: July 8, 2024

Date to Council: July 16, 2024

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### **Recommendation:**

Receive legislative services report CL-17-24 providing information regarding the upcoming official delegation trip to Itabashi, Japan to commemorate 35 years of twinning.

### **PURPOSE:**

#### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Designing and delivering complete communities
- Providing the best services and experiences
- Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
- Driving organizational performance

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### **Executive Summary:**

In 2024, the City of Burlington celebrates the 35th Twinning Anniversary with Itabashi, Japan. To commemorate the milestone, Itabashi Mayor Takeshi Sakamoto and other city officials will visit Burlington over the Canada Day weekend (June 29 – July 2, 2024), and Mayor Meed Ward along with other city representatives will visit Itabashi, Japan in October 2024.

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### **Background and Discussion:**

A twinning agreement between Burlington and Itabashi was signed at Burlington City Hall by Mayor Roly Bird and Mayor Keizo Kurihara on May 12, 1989. The relationship has flourished and remained strong since then through official delegation visits, citizen exchanges, gift exchanges, student pen pal and art exchange programs and memorable anniversary celebrations.

The City of Burlington is also twinned with the City of Apeldoorn, the Netherlands since May 2005.

Burlington's twin city relationships are actively supported by members of the Burlington Mundialization Committee – an established committee of Burlington City Council. Volunteer members of the committee coordinate a number of events annually to promote the twin city cultures with a broader goal of promoting Burlington as a world community dedicated to the United Nations philosophy of peaceful cooperation between people of the world through the understanding of different cultures.

The Mundialization Committee hosts the annual Sakura Festival and Canada Netherlands Friendship Day events and organizes pen pal and art exchanges with elementary and high school students. They also coordinate cultural events in cooperation with the Burlington Public Library such as haiku, ikebana and anime workshops. The Mundialization Committee fosters relationships with the Consul-General of Japan's office and the Japan Foundation and Japanese cultural groups. The work of the Mundialization Committee is a major contributing factor to the strength of the relationship for more than 3 decades.

Another major contributor to the strength of the twinning relationship has been the bond with citizens. The late Itabashi citizen Taroo Enomoto made an annual financial contribution to Burlington, directed to charities benefiting women and children, for more than 30 years. He also donated the Rhododendron Garden found at Paletta Mansion. The late Kan Nakazawa donated the Sakura trees found at Spencer Smith Park and along Itabashi Way. He has also given generously to the Burlington Art Centre Building Fund and funds a scholarship for international studies presented annually by the Rotary Club of Burlington – Lakeshore each year. The ongoing activities and exchanges have contributed to the strong twinning relationship that exists between city officials, staff and citizens.

On February 26, 2007, Council approved clerks department report CL-01-07 and the framework for managing twin city relationships. The framework, attached as Appendix A to this report, outlines the parameters for hosting twin city delegations and for participating in official visits to Burlington's twin cities. The 2007 approved framework outlined that the City of Burlington would celebrate the anniversary of twin city relationships once every five years, including the 25th year, and that after the 25th year, twinning anniversary celebrations would only occur every 10 years.

On December 11, 2017, Council approved an amendment to the City of Burlington framework for managing twin city relationships to permit the celebration of twinning anniversaries every five years.

2024 marks the 35th anniversary of the twinning relationship between Burlington and Itabashi. Planning has been underway for several months with staff at the City of Itabashi - Culture and International Exchange Foundation. Events being planned at this time include:

- An Itabashi official delegation visit to Burlington during the Canada Day weekend from Jun. 29 - Jul. 2, 2024.
- A Burlington official delegation visit to Itabashi to participate in twinning celebrations being held from October 17 – 20, 2024.

Both cities are arranging commemorative events that showcase the twinning relationship and the respective cultures to their citizens, and both cities will present a city gift with the maximum value of the gift agreed to mutually between cities.

In accordance with the approved framework for managing twin city anniversary celebrations, an official Burlington delegation to Itabashi would consist of the Mayor (or designate), the Council's appointed representative to the Burlington Mundialization Committee (or designate), Chair or Vice-Chair of the Burlington Mundialization Committee, Chair of the Itabashi sub-committee and two city staff responsible for the twin city relationship.

### **Strategy/process/risk**

N/A

### **Options Considered**

N/A

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### **Financial Matters:**

In accordance with the approved twinning framework, the City of Burlington will cover the airfare, accommodation, transfer and per diem costs for 6 delegates to travel to Itabashi, Japan to participate in 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary twinning celebrations. The City of Itabashi has defined Oct. 17 – 20, 2024 as their hosting dates. The cost of an official city gift will also be covered. During the visit to Itabashi, Mayor Meed Ward will present an official gift to the City of Itabashi.

### **Total Financial Impact**

A current estimate for the travel expenses for one individual travelling to Itabashi (air, hotel and transfers) is approximately \$3000.00. This number is subject to change. Once the travel cost per person is identified, any change fees or additional travel arrangements will be at the expense of the individual.

The purchase of the city gift is generally in the range of \$1200 to \$1500 and is sourced locally.

### **Source of Funding**

Travel expenses for the Burlington delegation and purchase of the city gift will be funded from the Mundialization Reserve Fund. The uncommitted balance in the Mundalization reserve fund is \$223,759 as of March 31, 2024.

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## **Climate Implications:**

N/A

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## **Engagement Matters:**

The City of Burlington website, social media, visual displays and community programming have been coordinated to promote Japanese culture and will continue to be used throughout 2024 to make residents aware of the 35<sup>th</sup> twinning anniversary related events and to inform about the history and significance of Burlington's twinning relationship with Itabashi, Japan.

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## **Conclusion:**

City of Burlington staff and members of the Burlington Mundialization Committee are eager to continue planning for the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the twinning between Burlington and Itabashi and to further cultivate the partnership and bond that has developed between our two cities over the past 3 decades.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Manager Committee Services

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## **Appendices:**

A: Report CL-01-07 – a framework for managing twin city relationships

## **Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.