

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Shane Bourke, City Manager	DATE: April 30, 2024
FROM: Janet McEachern	MEETING: Invest GP Committee
REPORT WRITER: Catherine Ridgeway, Director Events & Entertainment	
SUBJECT: The Bowes Utilization	

RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration recommends the InvestGP Committee receive the report for information.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL / COMMITTEE DIRECTIONS

At the February 6, 2024, InvestGP Committee meeting the following motions were passed:

“Committee direct Administration to bring back a utilization report for The Bowes showing how many events had over 250 people, how many were multi-day events, and how many events under 250 people that were City-led.”

“Committee direct Administration to bring back a report showing which events in the Bowes Gardens were profitable.”

BACKGROUND

The Bowes at the Bonnetts Energy Centre is an 18,000-square-foot flat floor space. Currently, the venue is primarily utilized as a full-service event centre which hosts large-capacity events. The venue hosts galas, fundraisers, tradeshow, concerts, weddings, funerals, and corporate meetings, along with user group sport bookings.

Events and Entertainment staff provide full-service event consulting in-house. The venue provides set-up and staging for events including (but not limited to): furniture set-up, pipe & drape, catering, operational set-up/take down, and a forklift and genie boom lift on site.

ANALYSIS

NUMBER OF EVENTS OVER 250 GUESTS

The Bowes caters to events with over 250 guests. For event bookings under 250 guests, the Teresa Sargent Hall at the Montrose Cultural Centre serves as an alternative venue, ensuring optimal space utilization.

In 2023, The Bowes hosted 50 unique bookings, with 37 events over 250 guests. Of the 37 events with over 250 guests, 14 were City led and 23 were externally led. In 2024, there are 42 bookings confirmed with 36 events over 250 anticipated guests, 13 of these events are City led and 23 are externally led. Events will continue to be confirmed throughout the year.

NUMBER OF MULTI-DAY EVENTS

In 2023, there were 11 multi-day events hosted in The Bowes. Currently, in 2024, there are 14 multi-day events booked, at the time of reporting.

To note with the majority of single-day events, there are typically two days of set up ahead of the event along with a single day for tear down after the event.

EVENT BOOKINGS WITH UNDER 250 GUESTS

There are instances where bookings for under 250 people do utilize The Bowes. These bookings are usually large meetings that require additional space for activities, equipment training, or sport bookings. Examples of sport bookings in The Bowes are the Celtic Academy's rollerblading and skateboarding units along with dryland training for the Storm and other minor hockey user groups.

In 2023, there were 13 bookings under 250 guests with one of these events being City led. The City of Grande Prairie's Leadership Network meeting was moved to The Bowes from the Teresa Sargent Hall to accommodate for the Wildfire Reception Centre during the Northwest Territories Wildfires.

In 2024, there are no City-led events under 250 guests booked and six bookings by external partners under 250 guests.

PROFITABILITY OF THE BOWES EVENTS

All events booked in The Bowes are structured to be profitable for the City; outside of bookings given as gift-in-kind sponsorship or events funded through the City's operational budget.

In 2023, The Bowes had 50 events/bookings, 30 were profitable, seven events were gift-in-kind sponsorships, six events were internally funded, and seven events sustained losses.

In 2024, The Bowes has 42 events/bookings to date, 34 are projected to be profitable, two are confirmed as gift-in-kind sponsorships, six are internally funded and no events are projected to result in a loss.

A data point of note; included in The Bowes utilization rates are large events hosted in the Bonnetts Energy Arena. The Bowes is utilized during arena events for VIP experiences, merchandise sales, coat check and storage.

The Bowes demonstrates solid financial performance, with the majority of events being profitable. All events booked by an external client are revenue-generating for the City. There are instances where the City will incur a loss on a show, this happens when a concert that is purchased by the venue does not perform as anticipated. Included in the City's losses recorded for The Bowes, are concert losses in the Bonnetts Energy Arena. Two show losses of the seven total losses in 2023 were shows solely hosted in The Bowes. The other five losses were major concerts and events in the arena that did not perform as anticipated. Notably, in 2024, all shows are trending towards profitability, reflecting effective management strategies in booking post-pandemic.

ADDING SPORT COURT AVAILABILITY

The purchase of a portable sport court would allow The Bowes to offer additional sport user group bookings. The venue would require flexibility from user groups for booking dates and times, to accommodate for contracted events.

For sporting opportunities mentioned there may be revenue opportunities, but this has not been costed out at this time. For a comparable example, the Activity & Reception Centre has a drop-in rate of \$5.25 per hour and \$80.00 per hour for a Community Partner booking.

The additional costs associated with court sport offerings in The Bowes would be the procurement of a portable sport court and sports equipment along with an increase of one FTE at \$89,331.84. To offer drop-in amenities from Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. would increase one FTE at \$57,723.12.

Relationship to City Council's Areas of Focus / Strategic Priorities

The use of The Bowes aligns with the Council's Strategic Priorities of Quality of Life, Innovative Efficiencies & Economic Readiness and Engaging Relationships.

Environmental Impact

There are no identified environmental impacts regarding the actions recommended.

Economic Impact

Optimizing the utilization of The Bowes directly affects the recovery rate of the Bonnetts Energy Center.

Social Impact

Optimizing the utilization of The Bowes enhances the quality of life and livability of Grande Prairie.

Relevant Statutes / Master Plans / City Documents

There is no identified relevant status, master plans and city documents regarding the actions recommended.

Risk

There are no identified risks regarding the action recommended.

Alternatives (Optional)

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement was not required for the response to the motion.

BUDGET / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct budgetary or financial implications to the action recommended.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

The Bowes continues to attract events with over 250 guests, due to its capacity and appeal for large gatherings. The steady increase in multi-day events further demonstrates the versatility and popularity of the venue.

The addition of sport court availability would enhance the venue's offerings, although would require a capital investment and additional staffing resources.

ATTACHMENTS