

Garden Centre Committee 2023

It is an interesting time to reflect on the year for the garden centre industry as many of us are in our second busiest quarter, the Christmas season. It's been a busy year for garden centres in Manitoba. One that saw snow on the ground in mid April that seemed to disappear overnight followed by a rush of customers to our businesses. Most garden centres have reported strong spring sales. The weather was on our side and we took advantage of it. Sales remained strong for most until late August through October when most garden centres reported weakening sales. It's difficult to assign reason for the drop off but many have speculated weakening consumer confidence as a result of inflationary pressures on household income. We will of course have this top of mind during the current Christmas season of November and December.

In July Vancouver hosted the Garden Centres Canada Summit which was well attended with IGCs visiting from every region. The three day summit was filled with visiting garden centres, presentation from industry experts, and a half day of site seeing. It was an amazing opportunity to network and learn from other garden centre owners and managers. If you haven't attended the summit in the past I highly recommend doing so. The 2024 summit will not be held as Canada will be hosting the IGCA Congress in Quebec where over 200 delegates from over 20 countries will be in attendance. This is an excellent opportunity to attend the IGCA Congress and to see some of our countries most impressive garden centres. Registration is now open and I encourage you to visit the website www.igca24.ca for details and information.

The big issue of 2023 concerning our industry and one that dominated the discussion at our last committee meeting is wage pressure. We began the year with a minimum wage of \$13.50 and ended with \$15.30. A 13% increase in a single year. Or for a wider perspective this has been a 49% increase since the beginning of 2013. This is of course only part of the story as many businesses have trouble filling positions at \$15.30 an hour is quite difficult. Our lowest paid positions continue to climb putting pressure to find ways to reduce labour hours or raise prices and pass the costs along to customers. Customers who are already experiencing the pressure of rising costs of living. 2024 will be the first spring season with a minimum wage over \$15 in Manitoba and we will watch closely how our industry responds.

Thank you,

Jordan Hiebert
Garden Centre Committee Chair