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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** November 12, 2024  
**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Alanna Bowes, Culture, Sport and Sponsorship Coordinator  
**Report Number:** COU24-132  
**Attachments:** None.

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**Title:** Stratford Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate Program

**Objective:** To outline the details and receive endorsement from Council to create the Stratford Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate Program.

**Background:** In collaboration with Destination Stratford and the Stratford Public Library, staff are pleased to introduce a new three-year pilot program, scheduled to launch on December 2, 2024, establishing two key posts: Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate. These roles will be instrumental in supporting and showcasing Stratford's literary and spoken word communities while also encouraging dialogue and cultural expression across generations. The positions of Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate are honours bestowed and do not represent a position of employment with The Corporation of the City of Stratford.

Creators in these roles will share stories through poetry, literature, spoken word, oral history, music, and/or the performing arts, helping to deepen the public's connection to literature, storytelling, culture, and heritage. Through this program, we aim to gather, preserve and share unique Stratford and area stories that shape our community both now and in the future.

**Analysis:** The program will serve as a platform for artistic innovation, public storytelling, and cultural engagement, culminating in a series of public presentations, community collaborations, and educational initiatives. The resulting works of this program will be added to the Stratford Public Library's permanent and evolving collection for present and future members of the public to access.

### **Poet Laureate Position**

The Poet Laureate position will serve to honour a poet (aged 25 years and older) who writes excellent poetry and focuses on themes that are relevant to the people who live in Stratford and area. As an ambassador for poetry and literature, the Poet Laureate will

be invited to attend events to share works and raise the profile of the literary arts in Stratford and area.

- **Duties and Responsibilities:**
  - Produce at least three original works for specific events or occasions identified by the organizing committee each year.
  - Make public presentations of their work at least three times a year.
  - Collaborate with the Stratford Public Library on at least one literary program or event per year.
  - Mentor the Youth Poet Laureate.
- **Term:** Three years.
- **Honorarium:** The Poet Laureate will receive \$2,500 per year as an honorarium, payable in four equal quarterly installments of \$625 each. Additional funding for literary initiatives is at the discretion of the organizing committee.

### **Youth Poet Laureate Position**

The Youth Poet Laureate position will serve to honour a youth poet (aged 14 to 24 years), who writes excellent poetry and focuses on themes that are relevant to youth who live in Stratford and area. This poet will provide a strong youth voice and will reach out to other youth to inspire interest in poetry and the arts – particularly the literary arts. As an ambassador for youth, poetry, and the arts, the Youth Poet Laureate will be invited to attend events to share works and increase engagement of youth with the arts.

- **Duties and Responsibilities**
  - Produce at least two original works for specific events or occasions identified by the organizing committee each year.
  - Make public presentations of their work at least two times a year.
  - Collaborate with the Stratford Public Library on at least one community youth literary program or event per year.
  - Be mentored by the Poet Laureate.
- **Term:** One year.
- **Honorarium:** The Youth Poet Laureate will receive \$1,000 per year as an honorarium, payable in two equal biannual installments of \$500 each. Additional funding for literary initiatives is at the discretion of the organizing committee.

## **Selection Process**

A selection committee will be formed, with all members chosen jointly by the Stratford Public Library CEO and Destination Stratford Executive Director. The selection committee will consist of five representatives including:

- A member of the staff of the Stratford Public Library.
- A member of the staff of Destination Stratford.
- A member of the City of Stratford Community Services Department.

Two additional representatives will be selected and *may* include:

- An organization or individual member of the local arts community.
- A member of the City of Stratford Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department.
- A representative of a local arts organization representing collaborative arts groups.
- A member of City Council.

The committee will review applications and select candidates based on artistic experience and merit, contributions to the arts, culture, and heritage community in Stratford and the surrounding area, recognition within their peer community, strength of references, and their ability to serve as ambassadors for the arts. Short-listed candidates will advance to the Interview Phase, with final selections for Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate being made by the selection committee.

## **Post-Pilot Program Continuation**

At the two-year point of the Poet Laureate Program, the organizing committee will evaluate the program's successes and challenges. Based on this evaluation, they will decide whether to continue the program after the third year, make changes to the existing program, expand it to include additional literary positions, or discontinue the program.

## **Financial Implications:**

### **Financial impact to current year operating budget:**

No financial impact to current year operating budget.

### **Financial impact on future year operating budget:**

The program will be funded by Destination Stratford through honorariums of \$2,500 per year for the Poet Laureate and \$1,000 per year for the Youth Poet Laureate, for the three-year pilot program. There is no significant impact expected related to this program based on the Destination Stratford 2025 draft budget that has been submitted for consideration.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

**Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships**

This report aligns with this priority as partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

**Work Together For Greater Impact**

This report aligns with this priority as it highlights the City’s ongoing commitment to strengthening partnerships with local organizations, including Destination Stratford and the Stratford Public Library. This project highlights our collaborative efforts to showcase culture and literature in our community.

**Alignment with One Planet Principles:**

**Health and Happiness**

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

**Culture and Community**

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT Council authorize the proposed three-year pilot Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate Program, in partnership with Destination Stratford and the Stratford Public Library.**

**Prepared by:** Alanna Bowes, Culture, Sport and Sponsorship Coordinator

**Recommended by:** Tim Wolfe, Director of Community Services

Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer