



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: October 14, 2025
To: Mayor and Council
From: Karmen Krueger, CPA, CA, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer
Report Number: COU25-124
Attachments: Wall Photo

Title: BIA Request for Funding

Objective: To seek Council direction on a request received from the Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA).

Background: The BIA has reached out requesting Council support for a project they are considering as follows <provided by the BIA>:

The Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area would like to install a mural on a wall that will act as a welcoming beacon for those traveling into our downtown core. The wall chosen is at 118 Ontario Street. The building owner is supportive of the concept (attached) that has been developed for the wall.

This piece will be an amazing addition to the City's collection of public art pieces and will attract tourists and visitors from near and far. Public art has the power to draw people in and make them want to explore a city. When combined with highlighting local musicians that will feature their music in a downloadable format, it magnifies the cultural impact and the support for local culture. Art tourism creates another draw to our community thus stimulating economic growth. By adding art to public spaces, we can make them more engaging and enjoyable for residents and visitors. Public activations spark conversations and allow people to connect in unique ways. Commissioning public art provides a platform for local artists to showcase their talents and contribute to the community's cultural landscape which will benefit all socially and economically.

The art installation at 118 Ontario will help contribute to Stratford's overall identity as a mecca of culture. The installation will foster community pride and provide a sense of belonging.

The installation provides recognition and professional opportunities for artists and cultivates an environment in which the creative class thrives. As art installations in the City continue to grow, Stratford will become more known as a city that includes serious art in its cultural repertoire.

Success will be measured and determined by:

- Increased foot traffic.
- Positive responses to questionnaires and surveys - both public and from our 320 members.
- Favourable responses to interviews with businesses, participants, city officials, and stakeholders.
- Support from electronic collection feedback with the use of QR code on the installation.
- Comments and conversations through our social media activities.
- Stories and testimonials from those affected by our project will be collected and shared through narratives, photos, and video documentation.

Information collected will be used to measure results and feedback to improve overall public art strategies and increase impact on future projects. Reflection and learning from the process and outcomes will help identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges moving beyond this activation to future projects.

The BIA is seeking \$20,000 to bring this activation to life. They remind Council that the Municipal Accommodation Tax has the express purpose of being used to fund Tourism-related initiatives intended to benefit both visitors and residents. Therefore, the use of MAT tax funds for this project investment would meet this intent.

Analysis: Before proceeding to Council, staff internally identified a consideration relating to the applicability of the sign by-law and whether this process was required. It was concluded that because there is no advertisement to a business attached to the sign, this could proceed as an art installation.

There are options relating to a funding source, should Council wish to proceed. The suggestion to use the MAT is relevant and appropriate, given the type of project. The ad-hoc committee is just newly moving forward, but it is not likely that a final product (policy) around the use of MAT funds will be completed before year-end. Given the nature, the project is one that would likely qualify for consideration under a new 'Use of MAT' policy, but this policy has not yet been developed. Should Council wish to wait until that time to allocate MAT funds, the tax rate stabilization reserve could also be considered. The General Manager of the BIA has indicated that they would like to proceed with the project in 2025, however, if required could wait until 2026.

The unaudited balance in the MAT Reserve Fund at June 30, 2025, is \$243,833.

Given the timing of this request, Council has several options for consideration as follows:

- 1) Approve the request as presented, using funds available from prior year MAT revenues collected. This option has nominal impact of proceeding at this time.
- 2) Wait until the ad-hoc committee has come forward with a drafted policy before deciding. While this option is also viable, it is likely that a project of this nature would qualify with or without a finalized policy.
- 3) Consider alternative funding sources, such as the tax rate stabilization reserve
- 4) Consider a lesser amount of funding
- 5) Do not approve any funding.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

Should Council wish to support this project and use MAT or tax rate stabilization funds to do so, there are no additional financial implications to the 2025 operating budget as the funds will be flowed from the existing reserve, having no impact to the City’s overall surplus or deficit.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

None identified.

Link to asset management plan and strategy:

Not applicable, as this would not result in a City asset.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as the City works with the BIA to continue the meaningful partnership.

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 provide direction on the request from the BIA for funding in the amount of \$20,000 for the installation of a mural at 118 Ontario.

Prepared by: Karmen Krueger, CPA, CA, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer
Recommended by: Karmen Krueger, CPA, CA, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer
André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer