

Staff Memorandum



To	Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council
Subject	2024 Poet Laureate Activities and Programming Report
Date	April 9, 2025
Ward	All
From	S. Schlichter, Director, Economic and Creative Development
Executive Member Approval	B. Araniyasundaran, P. Eng, PMP, General Manager, Infrastructure and Growth Management
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of Council with an update concerning activities and programming undertaken by the current Poet Laureate, Tyneisha Thomas, in 2024.

Background:

In November 2022, the current Poet Laureate, Tyneisha Thomas, was crowned at the Barrie Arts Awards after applying for and being selected as the 2022-2026 Poet Laureate.

Role of the Poet Laureate:

The role of the Poet Laureate is to raise the profile of the literary arts by:

- Writing and publishing poetry
- Performing poetry
- Educating the public on the value of poetry and the literary arts
- Encouraging and celebrating other local poets and writers
- Promoting literacy in all age groups

2024 Program Changes:

In late 2023 staff performed a program review to ensure the program aligns with industry best practices and supports the active role the Poet Laureate plays in the community.

On March 27, 2024, City Council adopted Motion 24-G-058 regarding the operation of the Poet Laureate Program which included changes to selection committee, future term lengths and annual stipend, with annual reporting to Council via memorandum of program activities.

2024 Poet Laureate Activity Summary:

In alignment with Council direction, the following outlines the activities undertaken by Tyneisha Thomas as Poet Laureate:

- Hosted three events, providing paid performance opportunities for spoken word artists, including her inaugural Poet Laureate event, She Is More, hosted at UPlift Black and featuring performances by a diverse mix of female-identifying and femme+ artists and attended by over 100 people.
- Served as an artist mentor for Making Change Simcoe County by hosting a poetry workshop.
- Read a new poem about her role as “the People’s Poet” at Barrie City Council for National Poetry Month in April 2024.
- Participated as a judge for the City of Orillia’s K. Valerie Conner Poetry Competition.
- Mentored emerging local artists by providing grant writing support and performance opportunities.
- Performed poetry for Culture Days at the fall Culture Night Out hosted by the City of Barrie.
- Supported the Barrie Women and Children’s Shelter by raising funds at She Is More and reading a poem at their 2024 Candlelight Vigil.
- Joined the Barrie Communities in Bloom Committee.

Plans for 2025:

Tyneisha hosted her 2025 Poet Laureate event, on March 1st, celebrating Black History Month and the contributions of Black artists to the Canadian cultural landscape. The event was hosted in partnership with the Provincial Poet Laureate, Matthew-Ray Jones, aka - Testament at Bloom Bistro and was attended by over 50 people.

Tyneisha will return to Barrie City Council to read a new poem for National Poetry Month, then will be hosting a National Poetry Month Open Mic, open to performing artists of all kinds, on Saturday, April 12th at CW Coops.

To keep up with all of Tyneisha’s Poet Laureate activities, visit www.barrie.ca/PoetLaureate.

Appendix:

Memo Author:

Amanda Dyke, BSc., Cultural Development Officer, Economic and Creative Development Department

File #:

C11 - POE

Pending #:

Not Applicable