



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 6, 2025**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** February 26th, 2025
From: Councillor Gardiner
Subject: Victoria Book Prizes and Poet Laureate Programs

BACKGROUND

During the past three months Council has received hundreds of e-mails in support of continuation of the Victoria (Butler) Book Prize and the Poet Laureate program which staff suggested could be eliminated in 2026.

The Book prize program started in 2004 with the Victoria Book Prize Society managing the adjudicating of books and the annual gala. Brian Butler covers the gala and the society expenses while the City has been covering book prize fee of \$5,000. When a local business which had contributed a Children's Book prize fee of \$5,000 ceased to do so, the City assumed that cost.

The Poet laureate and the Youth Poet Laureate program costs about \$12,000 each year.

While this amount of prize funding appears small, staff most appropriately recommended that these programs not be part of city's operating budget.

While many types of organizations offer book prizes and similar recognition awards, such awards are often, if not usually, established through endowments.

The Victoria Book Prizes and Poet Laureate programs are valued by the community, and should continue. The emails sent to Council came from across the country, creating a network of organizations and individuals who may be interested in contributing to the programs they and our community value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Direct staff to create a task force including but not limited to written word community representatives such as local publishers and book stores to lead a funding drive to create:

- a) an endowment of about \$250,000 to fund the Victoria Book Prize(s), and
- b) an endowment of about \$250,000 to fund the Poet Laureate Programs.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Gardiner".

Councillor Gardiner