

League of Canadian Poets Annual General Meeting Minutes
Saturday, June 8, 2019, 9:00am – 12:15 pm
Courtyard Marriot, St. John's Newfoundland

1. Call to order and welcome

The 2019 AGM was called to order at 9:00a.m.

Sarah de Leeuw (League President), welcomed all to the meeting and provided an overview of Robert's Rules of Order.

2. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: To approve agenda as presented.

Motioned by: Anne Burke

Seconded by: Brenda Scibberas

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

3. Celebrating our Community

The League of Canadian Poets has a large community that has stood strong for over 50 years. During the past year, the League lost some members of the community. Miriam Dunn (Atlantic Rep) spoke to some of the poets lost in 2018-2019 and read a poem by Carl Leggo in remembrance.

The group took a moment of silence to remember these poets who had passed. The League remembers Carl Leggo, Patrick Lane, Joe Rosenblatt, Tony Valuch, Barbara Williams, Rienzi Cruz, Sam Simchovich, Priscilla Uppal.

Sarah de Leeuw took a moment to thank the League's volunteers, Council members, and those in attendance. Every AGM member took a moment to introduce themselves to the group. Sarah also took a moment to note that staff have been working hard to make the League more efficient and more inclusive, and thanked staff for their work.

4. Approval of Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2018

One member asked if everyone in attendance should be noted in the minutes. Staff noted that only Council members were noted for attendance.

→ Anne Burke requested that her name be added separately to the AGM minutes as an attendee.

MOTION: To approve the minutes with one minor change.

Motioned by: Miriam Dunn

Seconded by: Anne Burke
All in favour. **Motion carried.**

5. Business arising from Minutes

Reserve Fund: Noted that during the 2018 AGM, members voted to create a reserve fund. Happy to report that a reserve fund in the amount of \$10,000 has been created to help the League exist in a more stable financial position.

6. Presentation of Treasurer's Report

Michael Andrews provided an overview of the Treasurer's Report, giving us an overview of our financial position and the audited financial statements.

Noted that staff have worked hard to increase revenues for the League and provided congratulations for success. Membership revenue has increased 9%, donations revenue is up, a huge improvement over the last few years. Overall revenues increased by 8.8%, while our program spending is up almost 20% (poet-centered spending). Salaries only went up modestly and controllable administrative costs have been well-kept.

MOTION: To approve treasurer's report as presented.

Motioned by: Rita Bouvier
Seconded by: Claudia Radmore
All in favour. **Motion carried.**

7. Review of Audited Statements

Noted that the financial statements were approved the night before the AGM, with auditors working hard to complete them.

Draft financial statements were presented on-screen for attendees at the AGM. Also noted that the time between the organization's year-end and the scheduling of the AGM is very short, and that finalizing financial statements presents a challenge.

- Michael noted that we've been provided with a clean audit opinion – meaning the auditors have found nothing wrong and are happy with our numbers and presentation.
- Cash flow is hugely improved from previous years. This is reflected in lower liabilities – the League is spending faster because we have the cash that enables us to do so.
- Overall, we have a slight excess of revenues over expenses for 2018-2019. We spent most of the money we received, and increased revenues provide a small cushion.
 - Revenues up in total 7.5%

- Membership revenue up 8%
- Program spending went up 19.7% in 2018 (this is money and support provided directly to poets).
- Administration expenses went up, small increase relative to inflation and owing to an office move. Overall, controllable expenses have been prudently managed

PK Page fund: Noted that after years of collecting funds, Council hopes to achieve our savings goal and launch the PK Page Fund program in 2020.

Updated Policies: Rules for non-profits and for audited opinions are becoming stricter. As a result, new policies will be put into place to ensure that the League can continue to receive an unqualified audit opinion. These policies will be reviewed and put into place over the summer. Members noted support for these changes. Lesley noted they will likely be included in the notes for the 2019-2020 financial statements.

MOTION: To approve the auditor's report as presented.

Motioned by: Rayanne Haines

Seconded by: Mary Lou Soutar-Hynes

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

One member asked how we plan to complete the financial statements for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, given that the AGM is scheduled to happen even earlier this year. Staff and Council noted that the timeline will always be tight to turn around statements within a couple of months, particularly with the number of invoices required from poets.

- One member suggested that AGM minutes be sent around to members after the event. Noted that these will be circulated in the post-AGM newsletter.

8. Presentation of 2019-2020 Budget

Lesley Fletcher, Executive Director, provided an overview of the proposed 2019-2020 budget. Noted that the Finance Committee has created contingency budgets to address any unforeseen budget cuts throughout the year.

- Noted a fairly standard budget which includes increases in payments to poets, in expenses related to our chapbook program, and expenses related to some recordings in advance of Frankfurt 2020.
- Noted that grant revenues are confirmed with the exception of the Ontario Arts Council.
- Noted that an increase has been made for poet support and payments wherever possible, and that staff works hard to keep our controllable expenses low. Administrative professional fees are down this year because for the first time in 3 years, the League will not be undertaking an office move.

- Noted an increase to estimated income from chapbook sales with new publications.
- Fortner Anderson (Quebec Representative) noted that many Quebec members feel membership fees are too high. He argues that \$185.00 is too high a fee for poets to pay to have access to federally disbursed funds.
- Ayesha Chatterjee (Past President), noted that 4 years ago, there was a discussion about the urgent need to bring in more donations and revenues for the organization. Took a moment to congratulate donors, volunteers, Council and staff.
- Miriam Dunn (Atlantic Representative) asked how the organization has been able to increase artist fees so steeply. Noted that this is due to increased Canada Council funding, and incremental increases to revenues each year.
- One member asked about the German Poetry Project noted in the budget. Lesley noted that in June 2020 Canada will be the guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, and noted that the League is conducting a small project to add Canadian Poets to the website Lyrikline in advance of the festival.
- One member asked about the Library Project noted in the budget. Lesley explained that the League has adopted the Griffin Poetry Prize library, which necessitated the purchase of new shelving and storage.
- Lesley also noted that the League has been approved for a Digital strategy fund, and that all of our projects will be reviewed through the digital review process.

MOTION: To accept the budget as it is presented.

Motioned by: Eric Folsom

Seconded by: Joan Conway

All in favour. One abstention. **Motion carried.**

- Mary Lou Soutar-Hynes noted that the staff work very hard in a very small office and encouraged Council and staff to ensure safe and adequate working conditions, and adequate compensation. Noted that the proposed budget includes a small cost-of-living raise for staff.
- Fortner Anderson (Quebec Representative) applauds the League's efforts to pay poets for new initiatives (Poem in Your Pocket Day, the LCP Chapbook Series). Suggests that remuneration should become an overriding principle for all projects. Noted that he was disturbed to find that some programs (such as Poetry Pause) are not compensated financially.
- Anne Burke (Membership Committee Chair) noted that membership fees may be an access barrier and the membership committee has spoken about the fact that they want to increase equity and diversity in the League.

9. Appointment of Auditor

MOTION: To appoint Hogg, Shein & Sheck to conduct the 2019-2020 audit for the League of Canadian Poets.

Motioned by: Ayesha Chatterjee

Seconded by: Kate Marshall Flaherty

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

Fortner Anderson noted that it is preferable to have draft financial statements printed out for the AGM. Council noted that this is ideal, but tight timelines and an AGM being hosted in a city where staff do not live may prevent this in some cases.

The group took a break between 10:20am and 10:35am

10. Presentation of President's Report

Noted that a written copy of the President's report is available in the annual report. Sarah took a moment to note that she believes that the League of Canadian Poets is doing amazing things, and that we can do even better, especially in terms of diversity. Noted a strong commitment from Council and staff, and noted that to achieve this – diversity needs to be reflected in our Council, volunteers and juries.

Noted huge growth for the League, with more Associate members, more fee waivers to provide accessibility, and more projects. Noted that this will be Sarah's last year as Council president, and we are hopeful to attract new and diverse Council members for the organization.

→ Sarah noted that she would like to create an Advisory Committee of Past Presidents to continue to support the work of the League. Eric Folsom suggested the titles Advisory Committee or Legacy Committee.

Noted that this is the third year that Sarah and her partner have supported the Broadsheet contest. Will continue to support this fundraising idea for many years to come, and hopes to encourage more creative fundraising efforts from Council members.

MOTION: To approve the President's Report as presented.

Motioned by: Claudia Radmore

Seconded by: Kate Marshall Flaherty.

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

11. Presentation of Executive Director's Report

MOTION: To accept the ED's report as presented.

Motioned by: Blaine Marchand

Seconded by: Tom Hamilton

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

Noted that the full Executive Director report is available in the Annual Report. Lesley took a moment to say that the organization has come further in three years than she ever thought possible, moving from a large deficit to creating a reserve fund in a few short years. Projects like Poetry Pause, the Chapbook Series, Poetry in Union and our contests have really transformed the way we operate and engage with members and one another.

In 2020, we'll be establishing the Leon E. and Ann M. Pavlick Poetry Award, a prize that we think will provide support and incentive for emerging poets.

Fortner Anderson asked about strategic planning. Lesley notes that she was hopeful that we could complete strategic planning in 2018-2019, but a tight budget and unsuccessful grant application made this impossible. With a small surplus from 2018-2019, the Finance Committee plans to commit part of this surplus to strategic planning, and part to increasing the Reserve Fund.

Blaine Marchand asked why we believe membership has increased so much. Lesley noted that there are many factors, including increasing offerings, more funding, improved communications, smoother payment processes, more staff able to connect with community, active Council representatives, and an increasing capacity for the office. It is a cyclical process that is reflected in growth each year.

Anne Burke noted that she is pleased to see that the longlist for awards are released, and beneficial for those listed.

Tom Hamilton noted that he is impressed with how the League is moving forward and that we could and we should be building more international connections similar to Frankfurt 2020.

→ Fortner Anderson noted that he would like to see the League to take on the role of lobbying the Canada Council to provide more funding to poets. He suggests a report that quantifies the wage conditions of poets in Canada.

John Barton suggests the idea of a report on studying the sector (Canadian poets). He brings up the example of cuts to funding for reading series. Many organizations that have traditionally been funded were defunded in favour of larger groups. Example, Tree Reading Series went from twice a month to once a month and Planet Earth had to resort to crowd funding to exist. John sees a change from funding for potential to funding for success or incubating talent and that this is very negative for poets and emerging poets. Studying what we want and what we do is very important. John also notes that we should be supporting our marginalized writers and that the LGBTQI2S chapbook is not a one-off.

- Noted that the League should be working to create more space spaces and opportunities for marginalized folks beyond the Feminist Caucus. Could the League create a Queer Caucus or Indigenous Caucus?

12. Motion to approve National Council, Executive, Committee Chairs, and Representatives to External Organizations

Anne Burke made a brief report on the Membership Committee and provided a printed report that was passed out to attendees. Anne brings up the point of singer/songwriters that apply to the League and that the Membership Committee suggests that Associate Member status may be awarded in these cases. Anne also provided a brief overview of the Feminist Caucus

Ayesha Chatterjee asks about the membership numbers in the Administrative Director report. Nicole provides an overview of how they are laid out.

- Miriam Dunn volunteered to edit the Regional Rep reports for the Annual Report 2019-2020 so that all reports follow the same structure and word count.

Noted that the annual report is not the place to circulate individual member news. Individual news collected from Regional Representatives will be circulated in ST@NZA and linked to in Between the Lines.

- Noted a typo in the spelling of Brenda Sciberras' name in the Annual Report

MOTION: To accept the Annual Report 2018-2019 with one correction.

Motioned by: Ayesha Chatterjee

Seconded by: Blaine Marchand

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

13. 2019 – 2020 Elections

Noted that the Nominations Committee has worked hard to create a diverse slate of nominees for presentation. Noted that we are in need of a Secretary, BC-Yukon Representative, and an Alberta Representative. The group had a discussion about the process of nominations and selecting representatives.

- Anne Burke stated that Membership Committee sent names for the Print Committee nominations
- One member asked how the Nominating Committee handles the situation where too many people put their name forward for one position. Sarah responds that we are looking to fill the positions with a lens of equity and diversity. Asks for a transparent process

- One member asked when a change occurred that we are no longer voting for nominees. Staff and Council clarified that members at the AGM would in fact be voting for nominees, but that many more of the positions were filled through email volunteers in advance of the AGM.
- Members noted that in the past, these juries and committees were often filled from the floor at the AGM. Staff and Council noted that this often results in a non-diverse group of people who are able to work in these capacities simply because they are able to afford to attend the AGM.
- Noted that the League sends out calls for nominations throughout the year, providing every single member the opportunity to self-nominate, or nominate others for different positions. Noted that it is structurally unfair that members who are not at the AGM cannot participate in these roles.
- Mary-Lou Soutar-Hynes wondered if we might internally conduct a voting process. Asks if maybe we can ask jurors for comments as to why they want to be a juror and what their expertise is.
- John Barton speaks again to ask that the process for selecting the final slate of nominees be more transparent.
- Tracy Hamon noted that in most organizations, the participants in a jury or selection committee is usually a programming decision, not voted on at the AGM or by members at all. Notes that any input on the juries is more open and transparent than what might happen in other organizations
- Lesley Fletcher notes again that every attendee at the AGM has the chance to nominate or self-nominate through email, and that we are being careful to not privilege members who may have more time or funding to attend in-person. Notes that through conversations with many volunteers, we have put together a diverse slate of nominees that was truly put together with the input of members
- Noted that a change to the Access Copyright structure means that the League no longer votes in an official representative

Noted that Lesley Fletcher has been considering a bold structural change to how our AGM is conducted each year. We are hopeful that we can move the AGM online each year, providing access and participation that is not tied to affordability of making the trip each year. We plan to continue our programming, but separate from the Annual General Meeting, to promote diversity and inclusion.

MOTION: To approve the Executive, Committee, volunteer and Jury members as presented.

Motioned by: Ayesha Chatterjee

Seconded by: Mary Lou Soutar-Hynes

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

14. Other Business

- Blaine Marchand asks that we send a note to Lesley Strutt to thank her for her work on *Heartwood* and as Associate Member representative.

15. Motion to adjourn

MOTION: To adjourn the 2019 AGM.

Motioned by: Blaine Marchand

Seconded by: Miriam Dunn.

All in favour. **Motion carried.**

Action Items from this Meeting

- Anne Burke requested that her name be added separately to the AGM minutes as an attendee.
- Sarah noted that she would like to create an Advisory Committee of Past Presidents to continue to support the work of the League. Eric Folsom suggested the titles Advisory Committee or Legacy Committee.
- Fortner Anderson noted that he would like to see the League to take on the role of lobbying the Canada Council to provide more funding to poets. He suggests a report that quantifies the wage conditions of poets in Canada.
- Noted that the League should be working to create more space spaces and opportunities for marginalized folks beyond the Feminist Caucus. Could the League create a Queer Caucus or Indigenous Caucus?
- Noted a typo in the spelling of Brenda Sciberras' name in the Annual Report
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