

DATE OF MEETING November 19, 2025

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SUBJECT **APPROVAL TO BID TO HOST THE CREATIVE CITY SUMMIT IN 2028, 2029 or 2030**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To request a financial commitment from Council regarding the proposed bid to host the 2028, 2029 or 2030 Creative City Summit.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support the proposed bid to host the Creative City Summit in 2028, 2029 or 2030 and commit up to \$50,000 in the 2026-2030 Financial Plan, funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.

BACKGROUND

The Creative City Summit (the Summit) is the annual conference of the Creative City Network of Canada (the CCNC). The Summit is typically held between October 1 and November 30, spanning three days and including scheduled evening events alongside a robust daytime program. This national cultural conference attracts 175 to 275 delegates per year and, since the first Summit in 2002, has provided space for established and aspiring culture workers to connect, share ideas and work together to build vital infrastructure for arts and cultural development. Each Summit offers content that is national in scope while exploring issues of relevance to communities of different sizes and geographies. The CCNC's annual Creative City Impact Awards are presented at the Summit, and the City of Nanaimo received the 2025 Creative City Impact Award for Cultural Events for *Luminous Paths: Nanaimo's 150 & Beyond* during the 2025 Summit in Kingston, Ontario.

The City of Nanaimo is a member of the CCNC, and representatives from the Culture & Special Events team attend the Summit annually. After receiving encouragement from CCNC, representatives from the City of Nanaimo and Tourism Nanaimo attended an information session for potential host communities at the 2024 Summit in Vancouver. City and Tourism Nanaimo staff later submitted an expression of interest to host the Summit in 2028, 2029 or 2030. The CCNC has now responded to the Expression of Interest with an invitation to submit a formal bid to host the event.

DISCUSSION

A successful bid for the Summit would draw delegates from municipalities across Canada, and would create opportunities for Island-based arts and culture organizations to take part in this three-day culture-focused event. Hosting the Summit would bring visitors to Nanaimo from across Canada and would generate significant event spending in the downtown core. This bid opportunity directly connects to City Plan policy C4.5, in particular:

- C4.5.10 *Recognize and promote the role that culture and the creative sector play in the community with respect to community identity and quality of life,*
- C4.5.3 *Make arts and culture visible and accessible throughout the city, in each of the designated Urban Centres, with a special focus on Downtown, and*
- C4.5.12 *Collaborate with partners to identify cultural planning and development opportunities.*

As noted in the Call for Applications (ATTACHMENT A), the Summit provides a national platform for governments and cultural leaders to exchange ideas, showcase best practices and inspire progress in cultural policy and planning. Hosting the Summit, particularly after the experience of hosting the BC Live Performance Network's Pacific Contact Showcase and Festival in 2026, would position Nanaimo as a national leader in the area of cultural development. The Summit provides an opportunity to highlight Nanaimo's arts and culture sector through tours, presentations and artistic programming, and to foster collaboration and investment in the local culture community. |

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The CCNC will fund the Summit through delegate fees and sponsorships. A financial commitment is required from the HC to fund three program elements: the host municipality welcome reception; an artistic animation and Indigenous welcome; and a series of local arts, culture and heritage study tours. These three program elements create meaningful learning opportunities for delegates and centre the local arts and culture community throughout the three-day conference. Culture & Special Events staff is set to work with Tourism Nanaimo and key cultural partners to finalize these program elements.

The deadline for this bid is 2025-DEC-12. Tourism Nanaimo and City Staff are collaborating on a bid package and have included the most current draft in this report (ATTACHMENT B). While the Call for Applications does not set a standard financial contribution for the required HC program elements, commitments from recent HCs such as St. John's, Waterloo, Vancouver and Kingston have ranged from \$30,000 to more than \$100,000. Tourism Nanaimo can commit \$10,000 to this bid as indicated in the draft HC budget within the draft bid package. Staff recommend a City of Nanaimo commitment of up to \$50,000, funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund (SIR). The current projected 2026 closing balance for the SIR is \$4,218,944, with a minimum balance requirement of \$351,780. Several initiatives are currently seeking funding from the SIR. Depending on the timing and scope of these initiatives, this may impact Council's ability to fund additional initiatives from this reserve should Council choose to proceed.

Should Council support the staff recommendation, the HC will complete and submit the bid package and work to obtain other financial support for the HC costs for the event. However, for bid deadline purposes, a financial commitment to fund the HC program elements is required for the bid package.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support the proposed bid to host the Creative City Summit in 2028, 2029 or 2030 and commit up to \$50,000 in the 2026-2030 Financial Plan, funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.
 - The advantages of this option: Economic benefit to the community through promoting Nanaimo's arts and cultural community and cultural facilities. Hosting Pacific Contact

- provides the opportunity to host established and aspiring cultural workers from across Canada.
- The disadvantages of this option: Commitment of staff time to the Host Committee and bid preparation. There would be less funds available for other City initiatives.
 - Financial Implications: The 2026-2030 Financial Plan will be amended for provisional to add the commitment to 2028.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not approve the \$50,000 commitment towards the bid to host the Creative City Summit in 2028, 2029 or 2030.
- The advantages of this option: None.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Loss of the opportunity to fulfil the requirements of the Creative City Summit bid and bring this national conference to Nanaimo.
 - Financial Implications: Will leave funds from property taxes available for alternative projects and initiatives.
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend alternate direction to Council. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Creative City Summit is the annual conference of the Creative City Network of Canada. Hosting the Summit would position Nanaimo as a national leader in cultural development.
- The Summit provides an opportunity to highlight the City through tours, presentations and artistic programming, and to foster collaboration and investment in the local culture community.
- The City of Nanaimo and Tourism Nanaimo are preparing a bid package to host the event and request a funding commitment of up to \$50,000 from the City of Nanaimo to fund HC program elements as required for the bid package.

ATTACHMENTS:

- ATTACHMENT A: Call for Applications: Host a Creative City Summit
ATTACHMENT B: Meet In Nanaimo Creative City Summit 2028 Document |

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