

OFFICER'S AND COMMITTEE'S REPORTS

Stroll of Poets Society, Edmonton Alberta

AGM March 15, 2026

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we look back on the year, I would like to express my gratitude to all members of the Stroll for their passion, creativity, and, of course, their powerful words. Thank you for showing up to listen to each other, for taking a poet aside to share how their words affected you, for offering support to each other during difficult times, and for honouring the importance of your own voice by stepping up to the mic.

This year, the Haven continued to have robust attendance at Upper Crust Cafe on Mondays, and an increase in attendance at Audreys Books on Sunday afternoons. Thank you to all the volunteers and impromptu helpers who make the Haven possible. I'd like to thank Max Vandersteen in particular for his continued support and mentorship in his role of Past President this past year.

What I am most proud of this year is how The Stroll undertook several other initiatives to engage with the wider community, including The Blinks and KinSpeak events in the Edmonton Poetry Festival last April, participating in the Calgary Stroll of Poets Festival for the second year (this time with a "Curated Reading" spot featuring Edmonton Stroll members), and sharing the *Poets Reimagine Canada* anthology at an Edmonton Historical Society event on TRC Day. Thank you to all those who made these events happen!

In the same theme of building connections, along with Steve Pirot and Kim Mannix from the Edmonton Poetry Festival, I helped to organize a meet-up between the organizers of several Edmonton-area poetry groups in November. As of the writing of this report, we are planning on meeting again in February to share our plans for this upcoming poetry month in April. I am looking forward to seeing what collaborations come through these meetings in the future.

In this upcoming year, I hope to cultivate more opportunities for members to be supported by the Stroll with leading their ideas for initiatives, workshops, and more. There are several projects "in the works" right now that I am excited to see come into being.

In a world in which we are consistently told to be afraid of others, the needful insistence of poetry to hear a perspective beyond our own holds increased significance. In trying times, poetry – and especially poetry communities, such as the Stroll – becomes an essential part of speaking truths the world needs to hear.

Thank you for being the Stroll and showing up for each other. Keep writing, keep reading, and keep strolling.

Respectfully submitted by Kayleigh Cline

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Pending

TREASURER'S REPORT

For the financial year 2025-26, the Stroll's total revenue was approximately \$18,500, while our expenses were approximately \$19,500 – meaning that we spent about \$1000 more than we took in. However, we are in excellent financial shape overall, thanks to the hard work and contributions of members.

We actually expected a larger deficit, given the higher-than-usual costs we incurred for our publications – specifically another print run of *Poets Reimagine Canada*. However, this was more than offset by the editorial committee's continued activities to promote and sell this important anthology.

In terms of revenue, our membership dues remained steady, and our admissions revenue increased. Our T-shirt sales more than covered their costs. However, donations decreased by about \$900 from the previous year when we had received several significant contributions.

Basically, our cash assets at year-end were approximately \$7600, which is higher than the historical 'cushion' we have aimed at to cover the upcoming months while expenses continue but revenue doesn't. This gives us some flexibility in planning activities for the next year. It also means that we can keep our admission charge to Haven events at \$5, keeping them as broadly accessible as possible. (Though we still need to keep banging on about the donations box at all events.)

One notable change this past year was moving from a cheque-based payment system to electronic banking. This means that, not only can we pay invoices without incurring the ridiculous cost of cheque books, but also that we can accept payments for admission or other revenue more flexibly. However, it did mean that our former system for keeping the Stroll's books—initially set up by our long-time bookkeeper, Ivan Sundal—had to be re-configured.

We remain very grateful for grant support from the AFA and the Edmonton Arts Council, which makes it possible to contract with the Writers Guild of Alberta for administrative support. (And we're extra grateful that our grant revenue increased by almost \$400 this year.) Without the continuity provided by such staff support, it would be much harder for our busy volunteers to keep the Stroll operating smoothly. We really appreciate the work by our admin coordinators, both Christyn Carter who handed over the job in mid-year, and Nisha Patel.

Finally, I would like to reiterate thank yous that I include in this report each year – but which are perennially heartfelt. The financial statements do not reflect the large number of volunteer hours that go into keeping the Stroll's programs going year-round. I would like to thank our auditors,

Gary Garrison and Manny Blosser, for their review of our financial records. I would also like to thank Ivan Sundal, one of the Stroll's founding members in 1991, for all his support. We let him off the hook this year for the job of re-designing those Excel spreadsheets. But he has been one of the invaluable individuals who has kept this organization on a steady course over the past 34 years.

And as always, it has been such a pleasure to work with my fellow Board members – the greatest volunteers around.

Alice Major

Treasurer

SECRETARY'S REPORT

It has been a pleasure working as secretary of the Stoll Board. My main job is to take minutes at the meetings, distribute them to the other board members, incorporate their comments into revised minutes, and then distribute a final copy to be voted on at the next meeting. The finalized minutes are then on a Google Drive Worksheet. I would like to thank Naomi McIlwraith to acting as secretary when I am not able to attend a meeting.

I have enjoyed working with the other members of the board and the board associates. They all take their responsibilities very seriously. They work hard to ensure the Haven, the anthology, the Blinks and all the other Stoll activities run without a hitch or a hiccup. They make it possible for the Stroll membership and the public at large to go about the important activity of sharing their poems.

Markus Eymann

COMMITTEE REPORTS

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The purpose of the Communications Committee is to ensure the clear and timely communication of Stroll activities to members and the general public for the purpose of cultivating a supportive poetry community. The Communications Committee coordinates the typical day-to-day communication tasks of the organization, including posting Haven notices and poetry prompts to social media, sending out press releases for special events, and cross-promoting other poetry events in the Edmonton poetry community.

The Committee held meetings about every two months. The Communications Committee promoted the Haven through posts on social media (Facebook, Instagram, and X) and on community calendars (Taproot, CKUA, Edify, and Audreys Books).

This year, the Communications Committee also:

- Completed a “new attendee” survey to collect information about how/why new people come to the Haven. The results of the survey showed that most new attendees come because of word of mouth, but a few also reported coming because of social media or a community calendar post.
- Ran a “small tasks” feature in the newsletter for small, one-time volunteer opportunities at the Stroll.
- Led a membership drive in the fall to encourage people to join the Stroll and returning members to renew their memberships early. The membership drive included announcements at the Haven, a poster promoting the benefits of membership, and a t-shirt fundraiser.
- Supported with connecting to other Edmonton poetry groups by creating promotional cards to distribute at the WGA Kick-off event (Sept).
- Reviewed and updated the eNewsletter Guidelines, in collaboration with WGA Communications Coordinator (administrative assistant), Nisha Patel.
- Promoted various Stroll initiatives, including: the Calgary Stroll of Poets (September 5 - 7), Edmonton Historical Society event for TRC Day (Sept. 30), recruitment for the anthology managing editor contract (Oct - Feb), Fresh Verse (Jan), Skip-the-Depot (Dec - ongoing), the AGM (Mar) and the Blinks (Apr).

Respectfully submitted by Kayleigh Cline, Max Vandersteen, Lois Hammond, Lasith Witharana

REACHING OUT COMMITTEE REPORT

Pending

POETS' HAVEN COMMITTEE REPORT

Greetings poets and friends! The Haven Committees pleased to report that over the past year the Stroll of Poets' Haven Reading Series is proving to be a successful effort for our organization. Since our audience numbers continue to grow we are, as always, very grateful to our members, family and friends who come out to support the readings. The increased use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and X, online media event calendars published by CKUA, Edify, Taproot, and Audreys Books, as well as our own Stroll of Poets website and Newsletter has effectively drawn greater numbers of visitors and new participants to our biweekly reading events. Consequently, this has also resulted in growing numbers of new members to the Stroll of Poets Society.

The diversity of poetic voices continues to provide inspiration to those in attendance and we are so grateful to all of our featured and open mic readers. We are especially pleased to see many new faces in the audiences and a larger component of young participants in our featured and open mic

reading spots this year. Regretfully, with the termination of the Stroll of Poets Zoom account, there were no occasions of the Haven at Home this past season. This tradition commenced with the onset of Covid and was included in our Haven season for the past five years.

Thank you to our amazing Haven committee: Naomi McIlwraith, Dorothy Lowrie, David Fraser, Audrey Brooks, and Max Vandersteen. The passion and commitment of these individuals is the heartbeat of the Poets’ Haven. Many tasks and responsibilities are performed behind the scene, as well as at the Haven events, by these volunteers, ensuring that the Haven functions as intended. Even through the many inevitable cancellations the committee continues to present a full slate of readers at our reading events. Along with our WGA administration assistant this past year, Nisha Patel, and our communications committee the events have been well promoted and very successfully attended.

Respect and appreciation goes out to all of the volunteers who have volunteered to act as mic hosts and door hosts throughout the season. Thank you, as well, to our sponsors and the wonderful staff and management of both the Upper Crust Café and Audreys Books. And, of course, many, many thanks to our wonderful Haven Host, Anne Gerard Marshall, whose welcoming smile and steadfast support is invaluable to the Stroll.

Finally, along with the board of directors, we believe that moving the annual Fresh Verse version of our Haven readings to January and relocating it to Audreys Books for the second consecutive season has once again proven to be a major reason for a full slate of featured readers and a packed house of appreciative listeners. The committee wishes to acknowledge appreciation for the great promotion from our Communications Committee and Audreys Books for this fact as well.

POETS’ HAVEN	2025-2026	2024-2025
	*Up to February 24	
HAVENS (Season Total including Launch)	18 (Upper Crust) 4 (Audreys Books) 0 Haven From Home	17 (Upper Crust) 3 (Audreys Books) 1 Haven From Home
ATTENDANCE	*565 (44/night)	910 (43/night)
FEATURED READERS (Total Scheduled including Fresh Verse)	86	82
OPEN MIC (including launch)	* 129 (16 first time)	207(28first time)

Submitted respectfully by Max Vandersteen, Dorothy Lowrie, Naomi McIlwraith, David Fraser,
Anne Gerard Marshall, Audrey Brooks

HAVEN DOOR HOST REPORT

Meet me at the door of the Poets Haven in the Upper Crust Café. You will be graciously received, as will your five dollar bill. There is always a sidekick beside me. Sidekicks are very important people, you know. I am grateful for every one of mine. This has been another good year for poets and poetry. Let's do it again. See you there.

Anne Gerard Marshall