

A Love Letter to a City: A St. Catharines 150th Legacy Mural Commission



Call for Artists
St. Catharines 150 Legacy Mural
Ontario Street Parking Garage
Expression of Interest (EOI)

Project Budget: \$50,000 CAD (inclusive of all artist fees, assistant fees, materials, equipment, permits, insurance, travel, accommodation, surface preparation, protective coatings, and all associated project costs)

Submission Deadline: Sunday, November 22, 2026 at 11:59 PM EST

Location: Ontario Street Parking Garage, Downtown St. Catharines, Ontario

Opportunity

The City of St. Catharines invites professional mural artists and artist-led teams to submit Expressions of Interest for ***A Love Letter to a City: A St. Catharines 150th Legacy Mural Commission***.

The title of this project is inspired by ***A Love Letter to a City***, an original poem by St. Catharines Poet Laureate **Shannon Kitchings**, commissioned as part of the City's 150th anniversary celebrations. During Stage Two of the competition, shortlisted artists will be provided with the poem and invited to incorporate a phrase, excerpt, or thematic element into their mural concept in consultation with City staff.

As part of St. Catharines' year-long sesquicentennial celebrations, the City seeks a bold and impactful public artwork that reflects the stories, people, places, and shared experiences that have shaped St. Catharines over the past 150 years while looking toward the future.

The selected mural will transform the north-west facing exterior wall of the Ontario Street Parking Garage into a significant public art destination, creating a vibrant and memorable gateway feature within downtown St. Catharines.

The mural site is a highly visible concrete façade measuring approximately **170 feet wide by 44 feet high**, featuring a series of circular ventilation openings that must be thoughtfully integrated into the artwork design.

The City welcomes proposals that are contemporary, visually compelling, community-minded, and respectful of the diverse histories and identities that contribute to St. Catharines' character. Artists are encouraged to create work that celebrates community, connection, transformation, and pride of place while interpreting the project's themes in an original and creative way.

Project Theme

Artists are encouraged to explore themes that reflect the evolution of St. Catharines while creating an artwork that resonates with residents and visitors alike.

Artists may draw inspiration from:

- Indigenous histories and enduring relationships to the land and waterways
- The Welland Canal and its significance to the city's development
- Shipbuilding, manufacturing, and industrial heritage
- William Hamilton Merritt and the city's early growth
- Harriet Tubman and the city's important role in the Underground Railroad
- The Garden City identity
- Agriculture, orchards, and Niagara's fruit-growing traditions
- Historic architecture and neighbourhoods

- Arts, culture, music, and community celebrations
- The city's diversity, newcomer experiences, and/or belonging
- Innovation, sustainability, and future aspirations

Artists are encouraged to interpret these themes creatively rather than producing a literal historical timeline.

Literary Component

As part of the St. Catharines 150 celebrations, the mural project will incorporate a literary element connected to the City's Poet Laureate program.

Shortlisted artists will be provided with ***Love Letter to a City***, an original poem by St. Catharines Poet Laureate **Shannon Kitchings**, during Stage Two of the competition. Artists will be asked to consider how a phrase, excerpt, or thematic element from the poem may be integrated into the mural design. The inclusion, scale, placement, and treatment of text will be developed at the artist's discretion in consultation with Cultural Services staff.

Artists will be encouraged to interpret the poem creatively and are not expected to reproduce the entire work.

Site Information

The mural will be installed on the exterior north-west facing wall of the Ontario Street Parking Garage in Downtown St. Catharines.

Approximate Dimensions

- Length: 170 feet
- Height: 44 feet
- Total wall area: approximately 7,480 square feet

The wall includes multiple circular ventilation openings that must be incorporated into the artwork concept. Artists should consider these architectural elements as opportunities within the design.

Given the scale of the site and available budget, artists may propose artwork covering all or a portion of the wall. Shortlisted artists will be required to indicate the approximate square footage proposed and explain how the mural responds to the site's architectural features.

Budget

The total project budget is \$50,000 CAD, inclusive of HST where applicable.

The successful artist will be responsible for all project-related costs, including but not limited to:

- Artist fees
- Assistant artist fees
- Design development
- Materials and supplies
- Surface preparation
- Equipment and lift rentals
- Travel and accommodation
- Insurance and WSIB requirements
- Anti-graffiti and protective coatings up to ten feet from the ground.
- Installation and project management

The City reserves the right not to award the commission if suitable submissions are not received.

Eligibility

This opportunity is open to:

- Professional visual artists
- Professional mural artists
- Artist-led teams and collectives

Residing in Ontario or with strong connections to St. Catharines.

Applicants must demonstrate experience delivering public art, murals, or large-scale artistic projects.

Selection Process

Stage One: Expression of Interest

The City will conduct an open call inviting artists to submit qualifications and portfolios. Applicants are not required to submit a mural design at this stage.

A Selection Committee will review all submissions and shortlist up to five (5) artists or artist teams.

Stage Two: Concept Development

Shortlisted artists will be invited to develop and submit a detailed concept proposal.

Each shortlisted artist or artist team will receive an honorarium of:

\$1,500 CAD plus HST to support concept development.

Shortlisted artists will be provided with additional site information and project requirements.

Stage Two Submission Requirements

- Concept renderings
- Design rationale and narrative
- Proposed mural coverage area (square footage)
- Preliminary budget
- Project schedule
- Material specifications
- Maintenance and durability considerations
- Approach to integrating the site's circular openings

Selected concept proposals may be shared publicly to gather community feedback prior to final selection.

Jury and Evaluation Process

Submissions will be reviewed by a Selection Committee that may include representatives from:

- City of St. Catharines Culture Services
- Indigenous community representatives
- St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre
- Downtown Association representatives
- Arts Advisory Committee members
- Public art professionals
- Professional artists
- City facilities and technical staff

The jury will consider artistic merit, project feasibility, public impact, and alignment with the project vision.

Evaluation Criteria

Stage One

- Artistic Excellence (30%)
- Quality and Relevance of Portfolio (30%)
- Demonstrated Experience with Large-Scale Projects (20%)
- Project Understanding and Suitability (20%)

Stage Two

- Artistic Merit and Visual Impact
 - Interpretation of Project Themes
 - Site Responsiveness
 - Technical Feasibility
 - Budget and Schedule
 - Public Engagement Potential
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Submission Requirements

Please submit PDF documents containing:

1. Artist Statement

Maximum 500 words describing:

- Artistic practice
- Interest in the project
- Relevant experience

2. Curriculum Vitae

Current CV outlining public art, mural, exhibition, and professional experience (maximum of 3 pages.)

3. Portfolio

A maximum of ten (10) examples of completed projects.

Portfolio examples should demonstrate experience with:

- Murals
- Public art
- Large-scale commissions
- Community-engaged projects (if applicable)

4. Image List

Please provide:

- Title
- Year
- Location
- Dimensions
- Materials
- Project budget (if available)
- Commissioning organization
- Brief project description

5. References

Two professional references familiar with your work and project delivery experience.

Include:

- Name
- Organization
- Email
- Telephone Number

Anticipated Project Timeline

Milestone	Date
Call for Artists Opens	September 2026
EOI Submission Deadline	November 22, 2026
Shortlisted Artists Notified	December 2026
Concept Development Period	January-February 2027
Community Review Period	March 2027
Artist Selection	March 2027
Design Refinement & Contracting	April-May 2027
Site Preparation	May 2027
Mural Installation Window*	June-August 2027
Project Completion Deadline	September 2027
Public Unveiling	Fall 2027

**Timeline for mural installation to be agreed upon with artist.*

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The City of St. Catharines is committed to fostering an inclusive public art program that reflects the many communities, histories, identities, and lived experiences that shape our city.

Applications from Indigenous artists, Black artists, racialized artists, artists with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ artists, and artists from other equity-deserving communities are strongly encouraged.

Copyright and Reproduction Rights

Artists retain copyright of their original work.

The City of St. Catharines reserves the right to exhibit, photograph, reproduce, publish, and promote images of the mural and related materials for non-commercial municipal, educational, archival, tourism, and promotional purposes.

Questions and Submissions

Email: culture@stcatharines.ca

Subject Line: *Artist Name – St. Catharines 150 Legacy Mural EOI*

Submission documents must be received by Sunday, November 22, 2026, at 11:59 PM EST

Accessibility

If you require assistance with the online application process, including language support, or would like to express interest in an alternative format, please contact Culture Services (culture@stcatharines.ca) or call 905-688-5601 x5244. A member of the Culture team is happy to assist you.

Help shape the next chapter of St. Catharines' story through a landmark public artwork celebrating 150 years of community, creativity, and connection.