

Royal Canadian Legion to hold student public speaking competition

Written By **Joshua Drakes**

Branch 220 Shelburne will host student contestants from C, D and E districts for a chance to move on to the provincial level.

The Royal Canadian Legion's annual public speaking competition is coming to Shelburne on April 20, with students of all ages and walks of life taking a bold step into the spotlight.

Chris Skazoloub, Sgt. at Arms for the Shelburne Legion Branch 220, said that this event is particularly important for those who may struggle with public speaking.

"Not all people can get involved in public speaking, because they may have challenges doing so," Skazoloub said. "But this helps those people,"

"It's really all about them, getting on that stage, having a great time, getting the people involved. They can express themselves how they want and it helps them break boundaries," he added.

Judges will be looking to see how the contestants get comfortable on stage, making it their own and captivating the audience.

"We have a score sheet that we look at to see how they portray themselves," Skazoloub said. "When you're giving a speech, a person is either going to look at you or look away. But if you can get that person to look at you, if you stare at them when talking, you've engaged them."

He said that presence is what the judges want to see.

"This is something that the judges are looking for. Walking around the whole stage, instead of being fixed in one spot. The use of their hands, body language. Everything comes into play," Skazoloub said.

Student speakers are organized into groups based on grades.

"The groups run from grade one to grade three, grade four to grade six, grade seven to nine, and grade nine to 12," he said. "Each one has a competition, so one winner will advance, and they have two runners up each."

There are also some important rules in place for guests coming to watch the speeches. Everything is curated to ensure that the speakers have the total command of the room.

"There's rules and regulations everybody has to follow," Skazoloub said. "There is no recording or cameras allowed. You must be quiet when they are talking, you can't get up to go to the washroom. It's all about them."

Skazoloub said that everyone who might be interested in public speaking should come out and support the student contestants during the event.

"It's just unbelievable what they can discuss," he said. "All topics are open. They can build the confidence to stand on a stage and express something that they enjoy or something that has gone on in their life. It's a fantastic thing."

"These kids are smarter than I'll ever be."

The public speaking event is to be held on Apr. 20 at Legion Branch 220 (203 William Street, Shelburne). Registration takes place at

11 a.m. and speaking begins at noon.