

A29



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: November 28, 2006
Author: Sue Harvey
Phone No.: 604.871.6001
RTS No.: 6434
VanRIMS No.: 01-5200-50
Meeting Date: December 12, 2006

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Chief Librarian and General Manger of Cultural Services
SUBJECT: Process for selection of the Vancouver Poet Laureate

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the nomination, selection and award process for the Vancouver Poet Laureate as outlined in this report.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

City Manager recommends APPROVAL noting the selection and appointment of a Poet Laureate provides an opportunity to recognize the importance of arts and culture in the City and enrich civic life through an important partnership with the non-profit sector and with the philanthropic leadership of a Vancouver resident.

COUNCIL POLICY

The City of Vancouver Cultural Goals adopted by Council in October 1987 are to:

- To promote a high level of creativity and excellence in the cultural life of Vancouver.
- To promote diversity in the artistic life of the community, including both the professional and non-professional, the traditional and the innovative, the established and the aspiring.
- To encourage financial and managerial efficiency in the operation of Vancouver's cultural organizations.
- To ensure the existence of adequate facilities for the creation and presentation of the arts in Vancouver.

- To ensure that all Vancouver residents and visitors, including senior citizens, youth, low income people, members of ethnic minorities and other distinct groups have opportunities to enjoy and participate in cultural activities.

PURPOSE

This report outlines a process for the nomination, assessment and selection of the Vancouver Poet Laureate.

BACKGROUND

On October 17, 2006 City Council directed Library and Cultural Services staff to develop and report back by year end with a selection process for the selection of Vancouver's Poet Laureate including the creation of program criteria and guidelines as well as a mechanism to select a nominee from among Vancouver's professional, published poets.

On October 20, 2006, Dr. Yosef Wosk donated \$100,000 as sustaining funding for a permanent Poet Laureate in Vancouver. Dr. Wosk's donation, which will be held in trust with the Vancouver Foundation, will ensure an annual stipend of \$5,000 for the Poet Laureate.

The Poet Laureate will be an honorary two-year position. During that term, the Poet Laureate will act as a champion for poetry, language and the arts, and create a unique artistic legacy through public readings and civic interactions. The Poet Laureate will also be expected to attend a variety of civic functions, participate in public poetry events and carry through one or more special civic projects. The general mandate is to raise the status of poetry in the everyday conscience of Vancouverites. Each Poet Laureate will be free to pursue an individual agenda in addition to their civic duties.

DISCUSSION

The selection of a Poet Laureate is proposed to be coordinated through a partnership between the City, through the Vancouver Public Library and the Cultural Services department, and the Vancouver International Readers and Writers Festival.

Selection Criteria and Process

Subject to Council approval of the selection process outlined in Appendix A of this report, a call for application or nomination will be issued with a mid-January deadline for submissions. Nominations/applications will be invited from published poets who are currently resident in the City of Vancouver, and who have either an established body of work or been recognized for notable contributions early in their career.

Submissions will be evaluated by a five-person Assessment Committee comprised of three representatives of the literary/poetry community nominated by the Vancouver International Readers and Writers Festival, as well as representatives of the Vancouver Public Library and Cultural Services Department. Submissions will include examples of past artistic work as well as specific proposals for how the poet will create, present or perform works of poetry relevant to civic events and lives of the citizens of Vancouver.

Submissions/nominations will be evaluated by the Assessment Committee using consistent evaluation criteria. The Assessment Committee will forward a recommendation for Council's approval in March and the successful poet Laureate will be announced in April during National Poetry Month.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Poet Laureate will receive an annual stipend of \$5,000 which will be funded through a private donation held in trust at the Vancouver Foundation. Assessment costs are estimated at \$1,200; source of funds to be the 2007 Cultural Operating Budget. The cost associated with the civic poetry events will be the responsibility of the Vancouver Public Library.

CONCLUSION

Across Canada today, there are Poet Laureates representing the cities of Toronto, Edmonton, Halifax, Victoria and St. John's, as well as representing the Provinces of Saskatchewan and PEI and the Government of Canada. With the creation of this Poet Laureate program, Vancouver will join these governments in recognizing the value and importance of poetry and creative expression in civic life.

* * * * *

City of Vancouver
Poet Laureate
Terms of Reference

1. Eligibility Criteria

- published poets who are currently resident in the City of Vancouver;
- who have either an established body of work or been recognized for notable contributions early in their career;
- have produced a minimum of two published works (not self-published), as well as other publications that display literary excellence; and
- some of their work should be relevant to Vancouver and/or subjects that comment on the life of the city.

2. Selection Criteria

- excellence of the poet's work;
- publication of a significant number of works;
- have made a significant contribution to poetry and the literary life of Vancouver;
- reputation as a poet of stature;
- have influenced other local writers and poets;
- viability of the proposed poetry/civic events; and
- potential impact on the community of the proposed poetry/civic events.

3. Selection Process

Eligible poets will be invited to submit proposals which should include the following materials:

- curriculum vitae;
- examples of past published work;
- proposal detailing exactly how the poet would propose to represent the City of Vancouver and interact in civic life; and
- confirmation of place of residence.

Nominations will also be accepted where the nominee has agreed in writing and provided the materials outlined above.

The nomination/application deadline is January 26, 2007. Following the deadline, an Assessment Committee comprised of three nominees from the writing/poetry community as nominated by the Vancouver International Readers and Writers Festival as well as representatives of the Vancouver Public Library and Cultural Services Department will review all submissions and make a recommendation to City Council. The successful Poet Laureate will be announced by the City during National Poetry Week in April, 2007.

4. Duties

The Poet Laureate will be expected to:

- participate in the literary life of the City;
- produce new original works during their term that reflect or represent ideas and issues of importance to the people of Vancouver;
- present, in person, works of significance at civic events, City Council meetings, or official functions;
- read from their work at the annual City Vancouver Arts Awards and other civic cultural events; and
- such other duties as are proposed in their submission and are deemed viable by the Assessment Committee.

5. Term and Remuneration

The Poet Laureate will be selected for a period of two years commencing in April 2007. An annual stipend of \$5,000 will be provided.

6. Intellectual Property

All writing, notes and original materials produced during the tenure of the Poet Laureate will remain the property of the Poet Laureate.