



CITY OF VANCOUVER

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ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

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Report Date: June 4, 2008
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Meeting Date: July 8, 2008

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Managing Director of Cultural Services and Chief Librarian

SUBJECT: Application to UNESCO for World City of Literature Designation

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council support a community initiative to seek a UNESCO designation as a "World City of Literature" as outlined in this report.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval noting that such approval does not commit future Councils to any program funding or services in support of resulting initiatives should the application be successful.

COUNCIL POLICY

There is no applicable Council Policy.

PURPOSE

This report presents a request from a coalition of individuals and community organizations who wish to seek a cultural designation for Vancouver as a "World City of Literature" under the UNESCO Creative Cities Network Program.

BACKGROUND

In 2004, UNESCO launched the Creative Cities Network Program to promote the social, economic and cultural development of cities in both the developed and the developing world. The program accepts applications from cities in one of the following categories:

- Literature
- Film
- Music
- Crafts and Folk Art
- Design
- Media Arts
- Gastronomy

Once a city is appointed to the network, it may use the UNESCO designation and association to develop local economic partnerships and programs as well as share experiences and create new opportunities on a global platform. The program seeks to support public/private partnerships that build on the entrepreneurial and creative potential of small enterprises with an emphasis on cultural tourism.

Currently, there are nine cities which have received UNESCO designations including:

- Literature: Edinburgh
- Music: Seville, Bologna
- Crafts and Folk Art: Aswan, Santa Fe
- Design: Berlin, Buenos Aires, Montreal
- Gastronomy: Popayan

If awarded, cities have a responsibility to demonstrate the willingness to operate internationally and to participate in the transfer/exchange of knowledge and information with other members of the network through, for example, UNESCO's Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity. Cities also must inform UNESCO every two years of the progress made in the implementation of policies and activities, both locally and internationally and in cooperation with other cities.

The UNESCO designation does not provide any financial support. It does, however, provide recognition of a level of maturity and potential in a chosen cultural discipline and a galvanizing framework to build community and global partnerships.

DISCUSSION

In recognition of the opportunity provided by the UNESCO program, a group of community leaders in the field of literary arts and publishing have joined with representatives of the Vancouver Public Library, and Tourism Vancouver to build a case for support to apply to UNESCO for designation as a World City of Literature. A list of the community Steering Committee is attached to this report as Appendix A.

This group's application sets out an ambitious series of activities to build on and enhance the existing strengths in this discipline using the designation to leverage a greater level of

awareness and potential new partnerships. The Steering Committee's application dossier to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network is available for viewing at City Clerks Office. A summary is attached to this report as Appendix B.

Key elements of their plan include:

1. Encouraging greater public participation in reading and writing, and more public engagement with Vancouver's literary culture;
2. Further stimulating the writing and publishing community in Vancouver, and to celebrate its achievements;
3. Strengthening the economic impacts of literary activities taking place in Vancouver; and
4. Raising the international profile of Vancouver's literary culture, and to support exchange and collaboration within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and with other international partners.

The Steering Committee held a public meeting on April 23, 2008 at the Vancouver Public Library to seek community feedback on their proposal. Approximately 50 people attended. Feedback was also sought during the City's Creative City Conversation Day May 12th and in the City's follow up online survey. Comments received at the meetings have been very positive. Written responses to a survey distributed at the two public meetings garnered 37 responses—all but one was in favour for a 97.3% rate of support. A sample questionnaire is attached as Appendix C.

On the other hand, the online survey question—" *A group of Vancouver-based community leaders wish to apply to UNESCO to designate Vancouver as a City of Literature. Do you support this designation?*"—elicited 24 responses of which 14 (58.3%) were in support and 10 (41.7%) were opposed.

Obtaining unanimous support from the full spectrum of the cultural community could be challenging. Unlike many other cities, Vancouver is also blessed with strong and vibrant film, new media, gastronomic and music communities—any one of which might have developed a submission under one of those categories. Staff note however that no other proposal have been developed and that the World City of Literature Steering Committee has strong momentum and organization.

Subject to Council approval, the Steering Committee will make an application to UNESCO. The Literature evaluation criteria and process includes a review of:

- Quality, quantity and diversity of editorial initiatives and publishing houses;
- Quality and quantity of educational programs focusing on domestic or foreign literature in primary and secondary schools as well as universities;
- Urban environment in which literature, drama and/or poetry play an integral role;
- Experience in hosting literary events and festivals aiming at promoting domestic and foreign literature;
- Libraries, bookstores and public or private cultural centres dedicated to the preservation, promotion and dissemination of domestic and foreign literature;

- Active effort by the publishing sector to translate literary works from diverse national languages and foreign literature;
- Active involvement of new media in promoting literature and strengthening the market for literary products.

Vancouver has a strong literary arts and publishing sector. The City currently supports the sector through grants to festivals (Vancouver International Readers and Writers Festival, Word on The Street and the Jewish Book Festival), through non-profit organizations (Pandora's Collective Outreach Society), through strategic partnership grants like Arts Partners in Creative Development, through Transit Shelter Advertising, through the Vancouver Public Library and through the Vancouver Book Award and Poet Laureate Program. Current grant criteria however do not provide for support to individual writers or to book and magazine publishing and other creative industries. City approval for this application would signal a higher level of support and commitment to this sector.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network Program has neither a deadline for application nor a timeframe for award. There are currently 20 applications under review under all categories and approximately three for the World City of Literature designation.

If successful, appointed cities are entitled to use UNESCO's name and logo under certain terms and conditions. Cities join the network for an unlimited period of time but may withdraw at any time by notifying UNESCO. Cities have to inform UNESCO on an annual basis of the progress made in the implementation of policies and activities, both locally and internationally and in cooperation with other cities. If it appears that a city no longer fulfills its commitments, UNESCO may invite the city to leave the network and will no longer be entitled to use the UNESCO brand association.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

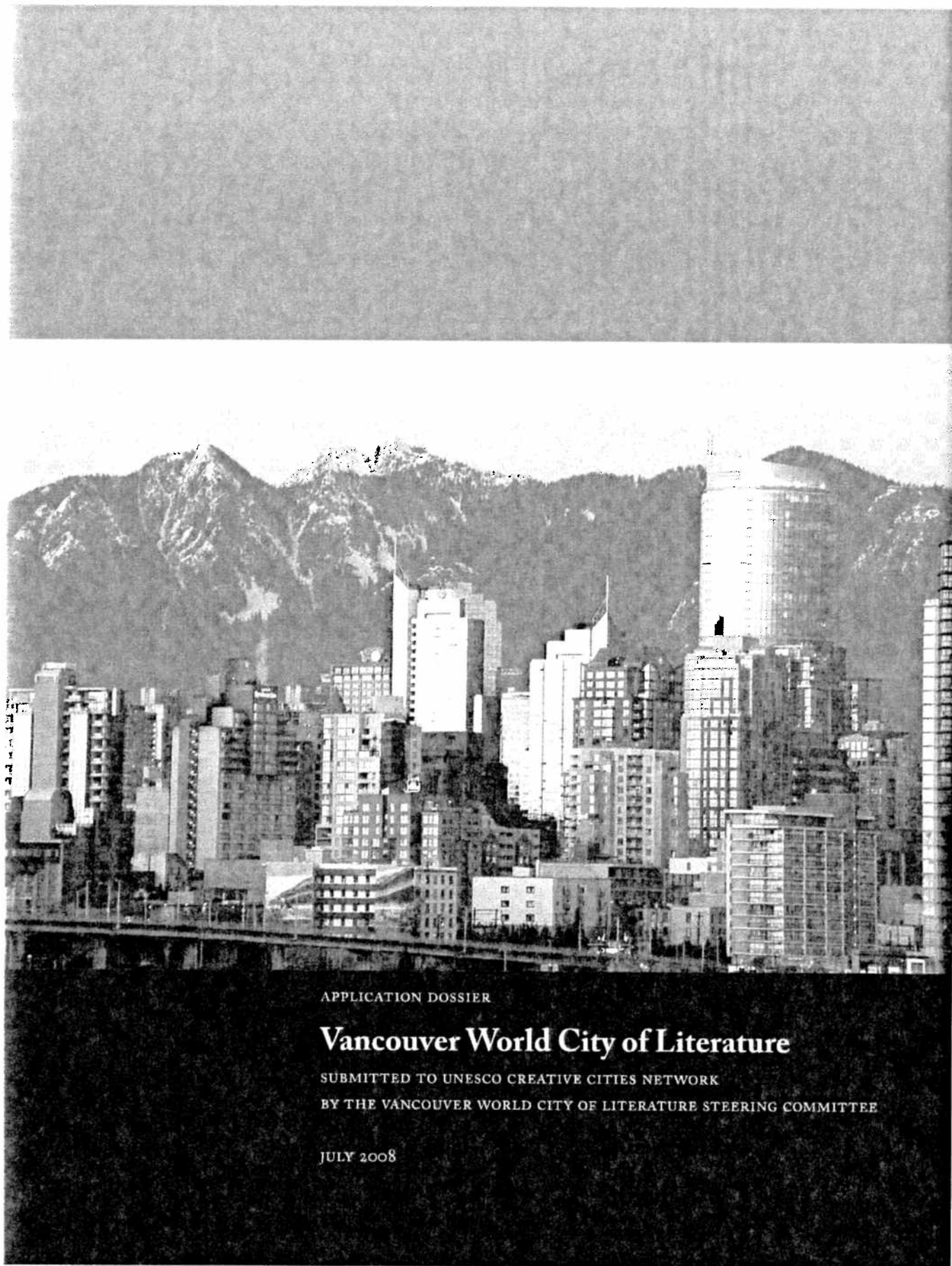
There are no direct or immediate financial implications. The proposal and application process does not commit the City to any future funding. Staff note however that the group does have programs, services and infrastructure in mind which may be eligible for City funding and would need to be reviewed in the context of the City's available grants and support programs.

There is some staffing implication for Cultural Services staff in ensuring annual reporting to UNESCO, although staff would rely on the Steering Committee to plan, develop, implement and report progress to both City Council and UNESCO annually.

CONCLUSION

This report sets out a request from the Vancouver World City of Literature Steering Committee for City Council endorsement of an application to UNESCO seeking designation for the city as a World City of Literature under their Creative Cities Network Program. Inclusion in the Creative Cities Network has benefits in terms of recognition and stature, and in galvanizing a community of support for the literary and publishing sector in Vancouver.

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APPLICATION DOSSIER

Vancouver World City of Literature

SUBMITTED TO UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK

BY THE VANCOUVER WORLD CITY OF LITERATURE STEERING COMMITTEE

JULY 2008

The application dossier to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network is available for viewing at City Clerks.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Joan Andersen
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, CBC RADIO

Rick Antonson
CEO, TOURISM VANCOUVER

Charles Campbell
AUTHOR

Douglas Coupland
AUTHOR

Ann Cowan
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Kuldip Gill
AUTHOR

Scott McIntyre
PUBLISHER, DOUGLAS & MCINTYRE

Linda Svendsen
HEAD, CREATIVE WRITING DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mary Trentadue
MANAGER, SALES AND SPECIAL EVENTS, BOOK WAREHOUSE

Alan Twigg
PUBLISHER, BC BOOKWORLD

Hal Wake
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL WRITERS FESTIVAL

MANAGEMENT TEAM

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VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL WRITERS FESTIVAL

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Vancouver, The World City of Literature

THE ROLE OF THE CITY OF LITERATURE

The overarching aim of establishing Vancouver as a World City of Literature (VWCL) is to leverage the efforts of the many authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and other professionals that compose the city's writing and publishing community to:

1. promote Vancouver's literary culture;
2. encourage public engagement—within Vancouver and Canada as well as internationally—with literary culture and the literary arts in Vancouver.

In short, the purpose of the designation, and the function of the VWCL, is to expand the public space for books in Vancouver.

The VWCL will aim to contribute new public space for books in Vancouver in many forms, including:

- new Internet or media platforms for books (virtual public space);
- new events and exhibitions (temporary public space);
- new Vancouver facility for the literary arts—an accessible community centre for showcasing Vancouver authors and publishers, hosting events and exhibitions, providing services and facilities for artists, and delivering lectures and workshops (permanent public space).

Vancouver's literary culture is invigorated by the efforts and achievements of writers, storytellers, publishers, librarians, booksellers, and educators. However, much of this work is carried out by small or medium-sized businesses, artists, and volunteers and is accomplished with limited financial and staff resources. There is a great opportunity to join these efforts together; to leverage them and aggregate their effect by attracting new funding and supporting new collaborative initiatives that bring Vancouver's literary culture to wider public attention. This is the opportunity the VWCL will pursue in association with the UNESCO designation.

SCOPE OF ACTIVITY

The VWCL executing agency will undertake programming in four areas: education, events, information, and partnering. In total, these activities will aim to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To encourage greater public participation in reading and writing, and more public engagement with Vancouver's literary culture
2. To further stimulate the writing and publishing community in Vancouver, and to celebrate its achievements
3. To strengthen the economic impacts of literary activities taking place in Vancouver

4. To raise the international profile of Vancouver's literary culture, and to support exchange and collaboration within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and with other international partners

In pursuing these objectives, the VWCL will operate within the following broad limits.

The VWCL will be a catalyst. The VWCL aims to be a catalyst for drawing public attention and support to literary resources and activities that already exist in Vancouver or, more broadly, within British Columbia. It will do this by promoting existing programs or resources, facilitating cooperation among partners within the writing and publishing community as well as other sectors, and fundraising for new or expanded initiatives that will leverage existing efforts to promote public engagement with literary culture.

The organization may implement new programs as well, but it will prioritize initiatives that complement or leverage existing projects.

The VWCL will promote writing from Vancouver, but also other Canadian and international work. The City of Vancouver will be the direct recipient of the UNESCO City of Literature designation. The programs of the VWCL executing agency will accordingly emphasize the work of Vancouver-based writers and publishers. In promoting the literary culture of Vancouver, however, the VWCL will recognize that the city's writing and publishing community is connected with colleagues, readers, influences, subjects, and cultures that extend well beyond the city limits. Therefore, the VWCL will incorporate into its programs a balance of activities, writers, literary organizations, and resources from elsewhere in British Columbia, throughout Canada, and around the world.

The following table provides illustrative examples of the range of activity the VWCL will explore in each of its four main areas of programming.

1. Education

- Establish a creative writing scholarship for secondary and post-secondary students
- Develop and promote reader resources, including those for Vancouver's diverse cultural communities and those for works published in languages other than English
- Develop and promote a book club kit for use within BC's school system

2. Events

- Facilitate cooperation among existing programmers of literary events in Vancouver to establish new or expanded events
- Develop a programming guide to support individuals or organizations coordinating and carrying out literary events
- Develop and promote a book club kit for the general public, including components to assist parents in encouraging reading within the family

3. Information

- Develop a comprehensive website on literary culture in Vancouver and British Columbia, including information on literary events, public listings of educational programs and literary groups, and downloadable resources for readers and writers
- Create and maintain a public listing of literary works and resources available in the languages of BC's First Nations communities

4. Partnering

- Cooperate with other BC industries—including food, wine, and hospitality—to cross-promote BC literary works with other prominent BC products or industries, including cultural tourism initiatives
- Cooperate with arts organizations and funding bodies to commission new projects to promote the literary culture of Vancouver and BC
- Establish media partnerships to expand coverage of BC books
- Liaise and cooperate with UNESCO and other international arts and culture organizations to promote Vancouver’s literary culture, establish joint initiatives, and support international exchange and communication with other world literary centres

ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

OPERATING STRUCTURE

The VWCL executing agency will be a non-profit foundation operated by a combination of paid and volunteer staff, with governance provided by a board of directors. As is the case with the current WCL advisory committee, the board will include broad representation from Vancouver’s literary and professional communities.

The organization will support a single staff position, an executive director, in its initial phase of operations. The executive director will work with the board to establish an ongoing process of strategic planning and prioritization, and will be responsible for carrying out established programs and plans for the day-to-day operations of the VWCL.

The VWCL’s volunteer complement will consist of qualified interns, drawn from the writing and publishing programs of Vancouver-area universities and colleges, as well as specialist project committees made up of representatives from Vancouver’s literary community and from other stakeholder groups. VWCL interns will join the organization for specified terms and in the context of defined responsibilities. Project committees will be struck by the executive director and may operate on an ongoing basis, or may be composed for specific terms or to address specific priorities or programs.

FUNDING MODEL

The funding model for this new organization will be informed by the following:

- The board of the VWCL will determine a base of annual activity and related performance indicators and budget requirements for the organization. This base will constitute the core programming of the VWCL, and the board will undertake to raise endowment funding in order to secure an annual operating budget.
- This annual operating budget will provide for administrative expenses and overheads as well as costs associated with core programming.
- In addition to this base budget, the organization will engage in targeted fundraising on an ongoing basis to support specific project priorities.

- The VWCL will focus on acquiring incremental funds to support the literary community in Vancouver and British Columbia, and will not apply for funding from established sources for literary groups, including publishers and writers. The organization will focus instead on funding sources to which literary groups either do not have access or are generally not able to pursue (e.g., private or corporate foundations).
- In establishing programs to disburse funds, the VWCL will prioritize opportunities to match funds from complementary sources, or to contribute targeted funding that will leverage existing resources of activities within the writing and publishing community.
- The VWCL will pursue both cash and in-kind contributions.

ENDOWMENT FUNDING AND THE ANNUAL BASE BUDGET

The VWCL will pursue an initial endowment in order to both capitalize the organization and provide secured base funding for an annual operating budget. The rationale for this approach is two-fold: (1) secure base funding allows for greater certainty in both near- and long-term planning and programming, and (2) it will relieve the staff and volunteers of responsibility for raising operating funds each year, thereby allowing them to concentrate on program delivery and incremental, targeted fundraising as required.

The board's initial endowment target will be \$6 million, from which the VWCL expects to generate an operating budget of approximately \$300,000 per year.

Could Vancouver Become a UNESCO World City of Literature?
A public consultation at Library Square, APRIL 23, 2008

FEEDBACK SHEET

The organizers of the submission to UNESCO would very much appreciate your feedback on this venture. Please take a few minutes to register your response to the initiative.

1. Are you generally in favour of this initiative? Yes. No
2. In our planning to date, we have identified (1) events (new literary events and event promotion), (2) education (scholarships and resources for young readers), (3) information (promotion of literary events and resources) and (4) partnering as priority areas that we will explore should our submission be successful. Are there other areas that you would like the organizers to consider?

3. What would the impact of the Vancouver A World City of Literature UNESCO designation be on you personally or professionally?

4. Are there further comments you would like to make on the UNESCO City of Literature initiative?

5. Would you like to be informed of our progress with this initiative? If so, please provide contact information (it will only be used for this purpose):

Name: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____