



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED
with Confidential Attachment**

Appointment of Fourth City of Toronto Poet Laureate

Date:	October 19, 2012
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development and Culture
Wards:	All
Reason for Confidential Information:	This report deals with personal matters about an identifiable person.
Reference Number:	P:/2012/Cluster A/EDC/ECON DEV/November/1211-036

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to appoint the fourth City of Toronto Poet Laureate. This report recommends that City Council approve the candidate identified in Confidential Attachment No. 1 for a three-year term under the terms outlined in this report.

The position of The City of Toronto Poet Laureate honours a poet who writes excellent poetry and has written on themes that are relevant to the people who live in the city. Toronto's Poet Laureate advocates for poetry and the arts, attracts people to the literary world, and uses his or her unique perspective to create a dialogue on contemporary issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. Council appoint the selected individual listed in Attachment 1 to the position of Poet Laureate for the City of Toronto for a three-year term; and
2. Council authorize the public release of the confidential information in Attachment 1, upon adoption of this report.

Financial Impact

Funding for the Poet Laureate honorarium of \$10,000 per annum is included in the Cultural Services base operating budget.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting, held on July 4, 5 and 6, 2000, Council directed the Commissioner of Economic Development Culture and Tourism to develop a plan, in partnership with the League of Canadian Poets and other community stakeholders, for the selection and appointment of a Poet Laureate for the City of Toronto in 2001.

In May of 2001 the City of Toronto Poet Laureate program was initiated with Dennis Lee serving as Canada's first municipal Poet Laureate. Since then several other Canadian cities have embraced the idea including Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal, Halifax and St. John's. As Poet Laureate, Dennis Lee embarked on an ambitious program that saw the 2008 unveiling of a monument to contemporary poet Al Purdy.

Pier Giorgio di Cicco became the second City of Toronto Poet Laureate assuming his position in October of 2004. As Poet Laureate, he has used the role to influence municipal policy in issues that address the urban aesthetic and its relationship to liveable and sustainable cities.

Dionne Brand was the third City of Toronto Poet Laureate assuming the position in September of 2009. As Poet Laureate, she used the role to raise the profile of poetry in the public realm through her legacy project, Poetry is Public is Poetry. A website was developed along with three projects that placed permanent physical representations of poetry in branches of the Toronto Public Library. During her term Ms. Brand was honoured with the 2011 Griffin Poetry Prize for her novel-length narrative poem, *Ossuaries*.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The following duties and terms of the Poet Laureate were approved by Council at its meeting held on March 12, 2001.

Duties:

The Poet Laureate must be given the opportunity to write. The Poet Laureate will commit approximately 15 percent of his working time to duties as the Poet Laureate. The time is to be devoted to serving as Toronto's literary ambassador at events that promote the literary arts and to creating a legacy project for the people of Toronto. The duties of the Poet Laureate do not include reading manuscripts or writing poems for civic occasions. It is the wish of Council that the Poet Laureate develop a legacy project for the City. The

project must be designed in co-operation with City staff and will be unique to the individual.

Term:

The term of the Poet Laureate is three years.

Selection Criteria:

The Poet Laureate must be a Toronto poet who has produced a body of published work that:

- (1) displays literary excellence;
- (2) includes poems about Toronto subjects; and
- (3) has influenced other writers.

The Poet Laureate must be willing to serve and have the ability to be an ambassador for writers and the literary arts.

Remuneration:

The Poet Laureate will receive an honorarium of \$10,000 per annum. Travel and incidental expenses associated with performing the Poet Laureate's duties shall come from that sum and will not be reimbursed. The City of Toronto gives the money to the Poet Laureate outright and will not audit expenses.

Administrative Support:

Administrative support includes a mailing address and support for routine office tasks and correspondence. It does not include secretarial assistance for preparing drafts or manuscripts for publication.

Intellectual Property:

All writing, notes and original materials produced during the tenure of the Poet Laureate remain the property of the individual, who shall retain all right thereto.

Publicity and Promotion:

The City of Toronto undertakes to use its communication resources to promote the post of Poet Laureate. The City makes extensive use of its web page and will maintain a link within Cultural Service's existing site.

COMMENTS

In keeping with the notion that the position of the Poet Laureate is an honour bestowed rather than a position of employment, poets are not invited to apply for the position. As such, in June 2012, an expert selection committee was assembled from the local literary community to nominate a candidate. Members of the selection committee included Joanna Poblocka (Executive Director, League of Canadian Poets), Lillian Necakov-Avalos (Branch Head, Toronto Public Library), Andrew McAlorum (General Editor, Canadian Poetry Online), Marc Glassman (Director, This Is Not A Reading Series) and Toronto's current Poet Laureate, Dionne Brand. The selection committee relied on its

expertise and consultation with the community to select a candidate; its recommendation is made with full agreement by staff in Cultural Services.

Toronto has a strong and thriving literary tradition. By continuing the honorary position of City of Toronto Poet Laureate, Council reinforces support for this tradition and the city's literary community as a whole. It is the intention that through this confirmation, the City of Toronto can look forward to dynamic legacy project for the city.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Confidential Information