



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Terms of Reference for a City of Toronto Photo Laureate

Date:	September 1, 2015
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development and Culture
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	AFS 21074

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to outline the terms of reference for the honorary position of City of Toronto Photo Laureate established by City Council in May 2014.

The position of the City of Toronto Photo Laureate will honour a photographer who is recognized for artistic excellence and who has made a major contribution to photography through their work. Toronto's Photo Laureate will be an advocate for visual culture, art photography, photojournalism, and use his/her unique perspective to create a dialogue on contemporary issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. Council approve the terms of reference for a Photo Laureate as described in Appendix A; and
2. Council request the appointment of the City of Toronto's first Photo Laureate in 2016 pending its consideration of support for the honorarium as part of the Economic Development and Culture 2016 Operating Budget.

Financial Impact

Funding for the Photo Laureate honorarium of \$10,000 per year is included in the 2016 Economic Development and Culture Operating Budget submission for Arts & Culture Services. This honorarium is part of the phased-in increases to cultural investment, 2013 – 2017.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting May 6, 7 and 8, 2014, City Council adopted the following recommendations:

1. City Council establish the position of "Photo Laureate of Toronto" on terms and conditions similar to that of the Poet Laureate provided that there be no cash prize and the photographs be forwarded to Toronto Archives to be made available to the public.
2. City Council request the Executive Director, Economic Development and Culture, to seek sponsorship to cover any costs related to the position of Photo Laureate.
3. City Council request the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to develop terms of reference for the position with a view to nominating the first Toronto Photo Laureate in early 2015.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.MM51.1>

At its meeting of March 12, 2001, Council approved the duties and terms of the Poet Laureate, upon which the proposed terms of reference for the position of Photo Laureate are based.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2001/agendas/council/cc010424/edp3rpt/cl016.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In May 2014, recognizing the great success of Toronto's Poet Laureate program, Council created a complementary position of Photo Laureate, to celebrate the craft of photography, the leaders in the field of photography in this city, and the contributions of photographers and photography in telling Toronto's story.

Just as the Poet Laureate is the City's official champion of poetry and literary arts, so the Photo Laureate could be the City's official champion of photography and visual culture. City Council approved a recommendation to establish a position on terms similar to that of the Poet Laureate provided that there be no cash prize and the photographs be forwarded to Toronto Archives to be made available to the public.

COMMENTS

In January 2015, Arts & Culture Services staff convened a panel of Toronto's leading photography experts to solicit input and recommendations for how a Photo Laureate program might be run.

The consultation panel included:

Gary Hall, Executive Director, Toronto Photographers Workshop

Nicole Schembre, Director, Corkin Gallery

Bonnie Rubenstein, Artistic Director, Contact Photography Festival

Paul Roth, Director, Ryerson Image Centre

Sophie Hackett, Associate Curator of Photography, Art Gallery of Ontario

Peter Kingstone, Visual and Media Arts Officer, Toronto Arts Council

Stephen Bulger, Owner, Bulger Gallery

Sam Javanrouh, Photographer, TopLeftPixel

The panel was enthusiastic and unanimous in its support for the idea of a Toronto Photo Laureate. With institutions like the Contact Photography Festival, the Toronto Photographer's Workshop, Toronto Image Works, major photography prizes (Scotiabank and AIMIA/AGO) and the Ryerson Image Centre (in addition to photo-specific galleries across the city), Toronto is now established as one of the leading centres for photography in North America and the world.

Unlike Poet Laureate positions, which are common, there are very few jurisdictions in the world with a Photo Laureate. The City of Tampa's Public Art Program commissions a photographer each year to chronicle the city and its citizens. In 2010, Fresno County, California, named an honorary, one-time Photo Laureate. In 2013, Portland, Oregon initiated its Creative Laureate program by naming a photographer as the first honouree.

The first Poet Laureate of the amalgamated City of Toronto was appointed in 2001. Since then, there have been four distinguished poets to hold the post: Dennis Lee, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Dionne Brand, and currently, George Elliott Clarke. The next Poet Laureate will be named at the November 2015 Council. Toronto's Poet Laureate is appointed to a three-year term which the photography reference panel agreed was a good length for the term of the Photo Laureate. Likewise, the Photo Laureate's work on behalf of the City can be supported by Culture staff at approximately a half-day to one day per week of coordination work as is currently done for the Poet Laureate.

The reference panel was adamant that the photographer's work has value and that a Photo Laureate must be compensated for his/her time, consistent with the amount paid to the Poet Laureate. All of Toronto's Poets Laureate have received an honorarium of \$10,000 per year since the program's inception; the panel agreed that an equivalent honorarium for the Photo Laureate was adequate. Originally, there was a private sponsor who wanted to sponsor the new position, however, that individual withdrew their offer.

The panel noted that as with the Poet Laureate, the Photo Laureate would retain copyright over any works produced as part of the honorary position.

The panel did not agree on a specific role for Toronto's Photo Laureate beyond consensus that it be an "at large" position that should be curatorial in nature rather than production focused, although a legacy project could involve the production of photographic works.

The panel concluded that a Toronto Photo Laureate should be an educator, ambassador and advocate for visual culture in the city.

Should the City wish the Photo Laureate to produce a "legacy project" during his/her term, the panel recommended a production budget of approximately \$40,000. Staff of the Economic Development and Culture Division would seek sponsorships to cover any costs related to the production of a legacy project. The panel suggested funds and in-kind donations of goods and services could be raised privately depending on the type of legacy project proposed by each individual Photo Laureate. Funding for the legacy project is not part of the Photo Laureate's honorarium.

In keeping with the notion that the position of Photo Laureate is an honorary position, and not a position of employment, candidates are not invited to apply for the position. An expert panel of citizens will be convened to nominate a candidate every three years as is done with the Poet Laureate.

Naming a Photo Laureate is an innovative way for the City of Toronto to mark its reputation as a city that embraces photography and visual culture, and combines both the tradition of arts laureates with a form of artistic practice and storytelling which is evolving with 21st Century technology and global reach. The fact that there are few other Photo Laureates is a compelling reason for Toronto to take the lead on this program which could proliferate across other creative cities.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Michael H. Williams, General Manager
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Attachment:

Appendix A – Terms of Reference for a Photo Laureate

APPENDIX A

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A CITY OF TORONTO PHOTO LAUREATE

Term

The term of the Photo Laureate is three years.

Appointment Process

The Photo Laureate is appointed by City Council on the recommendation of a citizen panel of photography experts.

Every three years, a panel of five experts is convened by City staff in Economic Development and Culture (EDC). Panelists put forward names for a long list which is then reduced to a shortlist of three to five candidates. Through debate and discussion, the panelists reach a consensus and propose a nominee who is then recommended to Economic Development Committee in a confidential attachment. Pending Committee approval, the nominee is then referred to Council in the form of a confidential attachment for Council to approve. Council is responsible for the appointment of the Photo Laureate.

Selection Criteria

The Photo Laureate must be a Toronto photographer who has produced a body of work that:

- (1) displays photographic excellence;
- (2) includes photographs of Toronto and Torontonians; and
- (3) has influenced other photographers.

The Photo Laureate must be willing to serve and have the ability to be an ambassador for the visual and photographic arts.

Remuneration

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

Administrative Support

Administrative support includes a mailing address and support for routine office tasks and correspondence.

Intellectual Property

All photographs and other original materials produced during the tenure of the Photo Laureate remain the property of the individual, who shall retain all rights thereto.

Publicity and Promotion

The City of Toronto undertakes to use its communication resources to promote the post of Photo Laureate. The City makes extensive use of its web page and will maintain a link within Arts & Culture Services' existing site.

Duties

The Photo Laureate is a photographer and must be given the opportunity to create and curate work. The Photo Laureate will commit approximately 15 percent of his/her working time to duties as the Photo Laureate. The time is to be devoted to serving as Toronto's ambassador of visual culture at events that promote the photographic and visual arts, and to creating a legacy project for the people of Toronto. The duties of the Photo Laureate do not include photographing civic occasions (the City has staff photographers for this purpose). The Photo Laureate will develop a legacy project, designed in co-operation with City staff and will be unique to the individual Photo Laureate. City staff will assist in finding resources to support the legacy project.