

# City of Calgary Poet Laureate Proposal

## Overview

The City of Calgary Poet Laureate is an artist officially appointed by City Council, for a two-year term, to compose and present poems for official City of Calgary events, to help raise awareness of local issues, and to raise awareness of the local arts community to citizens and the City of Calgary.

## Selection

Calgary Arts Development will administer the selection process, including the appointment of the Selection Committee, for the Poet Laureate.

The Selection Committee will advertise they are seeking applications and make a recommendation to City Council for approval in time for an October term start date. The selection process will be determined by the Selection Committee and be advertised before the accepting of applications begins.

The selection committee will consist of a maximum of nine members and include one or two individuals from each of the following groups: literary/poetry community, the Calgary Public Library, City Council, local bookseller and publishing community, the general public, an educator from a local secondary or post-secondary institution, and – if available – the outgoing Poet Laureate. Applicants for Poet Laureate may not sit on the Selection Committee.

The Poet Laureate will be published (not self-published) and a resident of Calgary for at least one year.

## Honourarium/Funding

The Poet Laureate will receive an honourarium of \$10,000 per year to carry out their duties. The honourarium will be controlled and distributed by Calgary Arts Development on a regular basis.

Funding for the honourarium will be provided as follows:

The Calgary Foundation	\$5,000
5 Corporate/Individual Donors	\$5,000 (\$1,000 each)

Funding for the honorarium is being requested for three years from each funder to help ensure the first term of the program is successful.

### **Additional support for the program:**

Calgary Arts Development	Marketing and promotion support (estimated at \$5,000/year)
City of Calgary	As required logistical and protocol support

## Background Research Summary

Poet Laureate is considered an honorary post, not an employed position. With this in mind the term of the Poet Laureate, on average, lasts two or three years, with some communities launching the program to coincide with their City Council term. Honoraria, or stipends, ranging from \$1,500 to \$20,000 annually, are provided. Some communities offer reimbursement of administrative or travel expenses, while a few provide a budgeted amount for additional costs.

Several communities use a general operating allocation to fund the program, including the honourarium. Vancouver received a private donation of \$100,000 as an endowment for the program and was able to secure matching funds from the province through a non-profit organization. Toronto entered into a funding partnership with the Canada Council and Edmonton receives an anonymous annual contribution to fund the Poet Laureate's honourarium.

Responsibilities for the Poet Laureate within these cities include being an advocate, champion or ambassador for poetry and the literary arts in the community, with the intent of the position being to raise the profile/status/public awareness of poetry, writers and literary arts. They are asked to produce new works that reflect the life of the city, either per year or per term, and are invited to attend a variety of civic functions, both informal and formal.

Several Poet Laureates have also been asked to initiate, sponsor or support events related to poetry and literary arts. Some have established "legacy projects" that continue after the sitting Poet Laureate vacates the position, such as the Capital Verse website in Victoria: [http://www.gvpl.ca/readers\\_cafe/capital\\_verse/](http://www.gvpl.ca/readers_cafe/capital_verse/).

The selection criteria established includes the condition that the poet currently reside in the city and some require that they have been a resident for a particular length of time. The poet must have produced a minimum of one, or two, professionally published work (not self-published), which includes works about the city or reflects its significance.

An evaluation of the submissions takes place by a Jury, Assessment or Selection Committee (the average size of which is 5 persons). Representation on the committee may include an individual from the literary/poetry community, the local public library, City Council (ex-officio), local booksellers and publishers, the general public, the outgoing Poet Laureate and local education institutions such as a university.

The selection process may start with nominations invited from published poets, self-nomination, or nomination through a literary organization. The Selection Committee, in some communities, can also recommend poets to consider. Poets are asked to submit samples of their work, with some communities also asking for a proposal of what may be created during the term. In a few of the communities, poets may be asked to present a reading to the Selection Committee.

The final recommendation of the Committee is then taken to the City Council, with the announcement of the Poet Laureate taking place at a public event such as the local arts awards ceremony or, in the cases of the communities that correspond their programs to Council terms, prior to Council inauguration.

Reaction in the communities has been described as extremely positive. For many, the reaction was far beyond their expectations as the Poet Laureate was quickly embraced by the community. The program has also provided great publicity for the cities.

Several cities spoke about how the program has increased or strengthened community partnerships with organizations such as the city's public library, writer's festivals and local arts councils. One community spoke of unexpected spinoffs, such as poetry being printed on the hoardings of building construction sites.