

CITY OF VICTORIA

Council Report

Date: *November 25, 2008* **From:** *Kate Friars, Director
Parks, Recreation & Community Development*

Subject: **THE APPOINTMENT OF THE 2ND POET LAUREATE TO THE CITY OF VICTORIA**

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to ratify the Poet Laureate Selection Committee's recommendation for the second poet laureate for the City of Victoria. The duties and responsibilities for the poet laureate are outlined in the Call for Applications (attachment I).

A Call for Applications occurred in September 2008 as the first poet laureate's term expired November 30, 2008. The Greater Victoria Public Library coordinates the selection process for the poet laureate position using an appointed selection committee who reviews the applicants. The selection committee consisted of a local bookseller, publisher and librarian from the Greater Victoria Public Library. Their unanimous recommendation for the second poet laureate is local poet and writer, Linda Rogers (Attachment II).

Linda Rogers has taught poetry at every level from pre-school to university and been a United Nations Poet for Peace, advocating for universal tolerance. She has had a wide experience in the "world of letters", having published poetry, fiction, non-fiction, spoken word for theatre and children's literature. Her work has been translated into many languages and she has received awards from England, France, Israel, Wales, the U.S. and Canada.

Linda's goals for her three year term as the poet laureate are to:

1. Continue much of the valuable work started by Carla Funk, especially events like the "Love Poetry and Chocolate" afternoon in February,
2. Go into schools, hospitals and rest homes to share the practice of poetry,
3. Encourage local magazines to include poetry in their pages and television and radio stations to have a poetry as "tweeners" (such as music is used).
4. Initiate a mail campaign, having poems mailed to the poet laureate then posted on a website and displayed in the library or at the Community Arts Council.
5. Advocating that poetry becomes an integral part of fundraiser events and other public occasions
6. Bring visual artists and poets together in a book collaboration to celebrate the cultural community
7. Do an exchange project linking up Victoria writers with children and youth from other countries.

Linda wants to celebrate the spoken and written word having "poetry become secular prayer, where words are peace circles that bring us together." In her role as poet laureate she will serve as the cultural and literary ambassador of the City and be an advocate for the literary arts.

Recommendation:

1. That City Council ratify the Selection Committee's recommendation to appoint Linda Rogers as the second Poet Laureate for the City of Victoria for a three year term, commencing December 1, 2008 – November 30, 2011.

Respectfully submitted

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Director

Cindy O'Regan
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Gail Price-Douglas
Com Dev Planner

1. Purpose

This report is to ratify the recommendation from the Poet Laureate Selection Committee for the second poet laureate for the City of Victoria.

2. Background

The City of Victoria established a poet laureate position at the February 2006 Council meeting. The inaugural poet laureate position was for a period of 2.5 years, to coincide with that Council's term and ended on November 30, 2008. The second poet laureate's term starts December 1, 2008. The duties and responsibilities for the poet laureate include the following:

- Commit to a full three year term,
- Assume the role of literary and cultural ambassador for the City of Victoria,
- Advocate strongly for the literary arts,
- Produce at least three new original works in each year of the three year term,
- Agree to present, in person, a work of significance of their own choosing at events including the following:
 - Once a year to City Council;
 - A minimum of two official City functions a year or a City sponsored event in the community;
 - The City of Victoria Butler Book Prize Awards Night;
 - A Greater Victoria Public Library event
 - A community event.

Council also approved a partnership with the Greater Victoria Public Library to assist the City in establishing the poet laureate position.

The first poet laureate Carla Funk, set the tone and scope for the position. Carla read her poems at City Council meetings, numerous community events and to children in schools and daycare centers. She organized the Capital Verse project, which showcased local poets each month on the Public Library website. Every year she composed three new poems and read a poem of her own to the annual City of Victoria Butler Book Prize. She organized an annual Valentine's "Love, Poetry & Chocolate" event on love poems by local poets. She wrote a poem, etched in granite at the Watering Can Spray Park in Beacon Hill Park.

Each poet laureate brings their own interests and talents and develop their own approach to the position.

3. Conclusions

The City of Victoria has benefited by having a poet laureate. It gives the literary arts a boost as the poet laureate acts as a cultural and literary ambassador, and raises the profile and accessibility of poetry in our community. The poet laureate being available at civic and community events means that poetry can be enjoyed by a wider audience. The established poet selected for this position receives formal recognition of their work and their significant contribution to the literary arts. The poet plays a leadership role in the literary community.

4.. Recommendations

That City Council ratify the Selection Committee's recommendation to appoint Linda Rogers as the second Poet Laureate for the City of Victoria for a three year term, commencing December 1, 2008 – November 30, 2011.

5.. List of Attachments

- I Call for Applications for Poet Laureate Position
- II Letter from Greater Victoria Public Library