

**City Council****Notice of Motion**

MM48.14	ACTION			Ward:All
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**Declaration of Hispanic Heritage Month for the month of October - by Councillor Cesar Palacio, seconded by Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly**

*\* Notice of this Motion has been given.*

*\* This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

**Recommendations**

Councillor Cesar Palacio, seconded by Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly, recommends that:

1. Toronto City Council formally declare October as "Hispanic Heritage Month" for the entire City in 2014, and for future years.
2. Toronto City Council formally request the Province of Ontario to declare October as "Hispanic Heritage Month" for the entire Province in 2014, and for future years.
3. Toronto City Council formally request the Government of Canada to declare October as "Hispanic Heritage Month" for the entire Country in 2014, and for future years.

**Summary**

The Canadian Hispanic population in Toronto is among the fastest growing ethnic groups in the City, representing over twenty Spanish speaking countries in the world. Several ethnic groups are recognized by the City annually with their own Heritage or Cultural Month including South Asian Heritage Month, Black History Month, Irish Heritage and Cultural Appreciation Month, and Portuguese Month.

In 2009, Toronto City Council proclaimed April as "Hispanic Heritage Month", an action which has helped to commemorate and reinforce Canadian Hispanic culture in our City. As a result, several annual local events have taken place throughout Toronto and the Province of Ontario in recognition of the social, cultural and economic contribution of our Hispanic community. Furthermore, the City of Toronto has a formal Friendship Agreement with the City of Quito, Ecuador, and this proclamation has helped to keep with that agreement. Despite the successes that have been attained in the past through this noble effort, shifting this celebration to October will expand and strengthen "Hispanic Heritage Month" for 2014 and the future to come.

"Hispanic Heritage Month" is celebrated in October throughout the world as Month of the

Race. October is a month that strongly symbolizes and celebrates the Hispanic heritage by encouraging and promoting all its traditions, cultural influences and enriching ethnicity of all Latin roots throughout North, Central and South America and Spain.

By declaring the celebration in autumn, the City, the Province, community organizations, institutions and the general consulates will be able to coordinate its efforts with the rest of the world in achieving top-tier cultural events that can attract visitors, stimulate our local economy, and reinforce our Hispanic roots. Furthermore, as all the Hispanic independence festivities conclude by the month of September, the idea of changing it to October will be represented as a closing ceremony for all the Hispanic Independence Days worldwide.

Overall, the Hispanic Heritage Month working group has proposed to host large-scale events, including a Hispanic film festival, art festival, gastronomic festival, multicultural festival and an award recognition festival. Proclaiming October as "Hispanic Heritage Month" will give Canadian Hispanics, Torontonians, Ontarians and Canadians as a whole an opportunity to celebrate, enjoy and experience the rich heritage of Canada's Hispanic cultures. It will also provide our City with an opportunity to reflect on the many outstanding contributions Hispanics have made to Canadian society.

The concept of a Hispanic Heritage Month, and moving the celebration from April to October, is supported in principle by the Hispanic Development Council, Centre for Spanish-Speaking Peoples, Canadian Hispanic Congress, Toronto District School Boards, and a large number of Hispanic community leaders and community organizations.

I am confident that this change in date will help to strengthen our collective efforts to celebrate Hispanic culture in our City, Province, Country, and abroad.

(Submitted to City Council on February 19 and 20, 2014 as Member Motion MM48.14)

### **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM48.14

Letters in support of Hispanic Heritage Month, from Claudio Ruiz-Pilarte, The Centre for Spanish-Speaking People; Nuria L. Rajo, Canadian Hispanic Congress; Fernando Valladares, Hispanic Fiesta; Fernando Valladares, Las Flores Non-Profit Housing Corporation; Margarita Feliciano, Cultural Celebration of the Spanish Language; Jorge Patricio Viera, Association of Ecuadorians in Ontario; and Eduardo Harari, Hispanic Political Affairs Committee of Canada (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-66956.pdf>)