Member Motion

City Council

Notice of Motion

**MM55.67**  
**ACTION**  
Ward:20

**Commemorating physician George Robert Grasett - by Councillor Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton**

*Notice of this Motion has been given.  
This Motion is subject to referral to the Toronto and East York Community Council. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

**Recommendations**

Councillor Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, seconded by Councillor Mike Layton, recommends that:

1. City Council approve the renaming of the public space at the south-east corner of Adelaide Street West and Widmer Street "George Robert Grasett Park" in honour of physician George Robert Grasett.

2. City Council direct the Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to give effect to the naming of "George Robert Grasett Park."

3. City Council endorse in principle a partnership with the Ireland Park Foundation to create an appropriate memorial to George Robert Grasett and those who died from typhus at the former Emigrant Hospital located on the same block as the park.

**Summary**

The City has secured, as part of the re-development of 21 Widmer Street, a piece of public property on the south-east corner of Widmer Street and Adelaide Street West, a part of the same block that was occupied by the Emigrant Hospital in 1847. The previous and current local councillors have been in discussions with the Ireland Park Foundation about creating an appropriate memorial on this site to Dr. Grasett and those who died at the Emigrant Hospital. Through another nearby re-development, $600,000 in parkland dedication funding has already been earmarked in the Parks Capital Budget.

In the 1840s, the failure of the potato crop forced one million Irish to emigrate and it is estimated that another 800,000 died from starvation. In 1847 alone, 38,560 refugees arrived in Toronto, a number greater than the population of the City at the time. Many Irish refugees were sick and dying from "ships fever" or typhus as we know it today.

Despite the prevailing anti-Catholic bigotry in Toronto at the time, physician George Robert Grasett worked tirelessly as the chief medical officer at the Emigrant Hospital, located at John.
Street and King Street West, along with a staff of orderlies and nurses, to care for the overwhelming numbers of people with typhus. Dr. Grasett died from the infection himself on July 16, 1847. Like the Irish victims of the disease, many of the orderlies, nurses, and doctors who succumbed to typhus are unknown to history. Dr. Grasett's personal sacrifice is a symbol representing much more than his individual deeds.

This Motion recommends the public space be named "George Robert Grasett Park" and that City Council approve, in principle, working with the Ireland Park Foundation to commemorate Dr. Grasett and those who died at the Emigrant Hospital.

(Submitted to City Council on August 25 and 26, 2014 as MM55.67)

**Background Information (City Council)**

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