

## **Proposal to Rename Bloor-Parliament Parkette to Rekai Family Parkette**

<b>Date:</b>	April 15, 2014
<b>To:</b>	Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 28 – Toronto Centre – Rosedale
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2014\Cluster A\PFR\TE32-051314-AFS#18205

### **SUMMARY**

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This staff report is about a matter for which Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

The Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division reviewed this renaming proposal and acknowledges the significant contributions of the Rekai family to the City of Toronto. In researching this naming proposal, Parks, Forestry and Recreation reviewed the Council-approved *Honourific and Street Naming Policy* and found that this naming proposal met all policy criteria.

Parks, Forestry, and Recreation is recommending renaming the Bloor-Parliament Parkette located at 625 Bloor Street East, at the intersection of Bloor Street East and Parliament Street, as the "Rekai Family Parkette."

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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**The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division recommends that Toronto and East York Community Council:**

1. Officially rename the Bloor-Parliament Parkette, 625 Bloor Street East, as the "Rekai Family Parkette."

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of June 18, 2013, Toronto East York Community Council directed the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division to report back on renaming Bloor-Parliament Parkette (625 Bloor Street East) located at the intersection of Bloor Street East and Parliament Street, as the "Rekai Family Parkette" (Item TE25.124: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.TE25.124#>).

## COMMENTS

In 1948, Hungary was occupied by the Soviets and declared a socialist republic. Two brothers, John Rekai, a surgeon, and Paul Rekai, a physician, along with their family, fled Hungary and emigrated to the West. By 1950, they all arrived in Canada and settled in Toronto.

At that time, Toronto was experiencing a significant influx of immigrants. Many immigrants lacked English language skills. The Rekai brothers strongly believed that their patients' wellbeing could be improved by making them feel at home by using their native language and by understanding how their culture viewed illnesses and different healing practices.

After receiving their Canadian medical accreditation, the Rekai brothers converted an old house on Sherbourne Street into a small hospital and called it Central Hospital. This private hospital offered 32 beds for patients in more than 30 different languages and an ethnically diverse cuisine. Later, with the assistance of the Ontario provincial government, Central Hospital expanded to 179 beds and became one of the first truly multicultural public hospitals in Ontario. In 1997, Central Hospital was merged with Wellesley Hospital and known as Wellesley-Central. Eventually, what was once known as Central Hospital was turned into an ambulatory care centre.

In 1988, the Rekai brothers decided to extend their services to longer term care and provide comfort to elderly citizens whose native tongue was not English. The Rekai Centres became the first multilingual, non-profit nursing home in Canada. Today, the two sites, Rekai Centre at Sherbourne Place and Rekai Centre at Wellesley Central Place, provide 282 beds for long-term care to residents from various cultural backgrounds.

In her own way, Kati Rekai (John Rekai's wife) also worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between the new world and the old. She ran a newcomer hotline in the hospital, was a weekly commentator of CIAO Radio, a columnist for a Hungarian-English magazine, founding member of the Canadian/Ethnic Media Association, a member of the Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Director of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Writers' Union of Canada.

Kati Rekai was also an accomplished author of a children's guidebook series, namely the – Adventures of Mickey, Taggy, Puppo and Cica, where four furry multicultural friends

explore the world as well as welcome visitors to Canada. Worldwide, 300,000 copies of this adventure series were sold.

Four members of the Rekai family: John Rekai, Kati Rekai, their son-in-law, Ronald Rickerd, and Paul Rekai were all appointed to the Order of Canada.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff have exercised due diligence in researching this naming proposal. As part of the research, Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff compared the proposal with the eligibility and criteria set out in the Council-approved *Honourific and Street Naming Policy*. This naming proposal meets all criteria identified in the *Honourific and Street Naming Policy*.

### **Public Consultation**

Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff produced and posted a sign (see attached) in the park advising of the request to rename the Bloor-Parliament Parkette to the Rekai Family Parkette and requested that anyone interested send comments to [parksnaming@toronto.ca](mailto:parksnaming@toronto.ca). To date, no objections were received.

### **CONTACT**

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Email: [bcrump@toronto.ca](mailto:bcrump@toronto.ca)

### **SIGNATURE**

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Richard Ubbens  
Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

### **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1: Park Sign used for Public Consultation