

## City Council

### Notice of Motion

MM7.6	ACTION			Ward: All
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### **Accepting the Donation of the Royal Canadian Air Force Wing Commander Lieutenant-Colonel William G. Barker Memorial Statue - by Councillor Paul Ainslie, seconded by Mike Layton**

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

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

### **Recommendations**

Councillor Paul Ainslie, seconded by Mike Layton, recommends that:

1. City Council accept the donation of the William Barker Memorial Statue by Armando Barbon, subject to the conditions of the Public Art and Monuments Donations Policy and subject to a donation agreement with the Donor, and City Council request City staff to determine the location for the statue in a high-pedestrian-volume site within the former City of Toronto area.

### **Summary**

Toronto has rich history. Commemorating significant contributors who had an impact the City's fabric is important. William George Barker, Victoria Cross recipient, born in 1894, first came to live in Toronto in 1919 following World War I with his best friend Billy Bishop. Mr. Barker would call the City of Toronto his home until his death in 1930.

During his short life, William G. Barker VC had a substantial influence on the City with his numerous achievements including:

- created the first commercial airline (“Bishop Barker Airlines”) that flew out of Armour Heights and from Lake Ontario by what is aptly named Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport;
- requested the first landing rights at the City Island for a venture that flew passengers from Toronto to Muskoka during the summer months;
- with Billy Bishop, began what is now known as the Toronto International Air Show;
- was the first President of the newly christened Toronto Maple Leafs under new owner Conn Smythe, whom William G. Barker had taught to be an “Airborne Observer” for the Royal Air Force while they were both in France;
- was the first Executive Director (pro tem) of the Royal Canadian Air Force;
- was the first President of the Aero Club of Canada (Toronto);

- delivered the first piece of commercial cargo in North America between Toronto-New York City-Montreal-Toronto;
- the first pilot to make a transcontinental flight from Toronto's Leaside to New York City;
- introduced parachutes to the Canadian Air Force; and
- today William G. Barker remains the most decorated military service person in the entire British Empire.

The City of Toronto however does not have a visible memorial to celebrate William Barker VC in order for his story to be told and remembered. His inspirational life story can reach our youth and teach them to strive for greatness no matter their age or path in life. A bronze statue has been crafted by renowned Canadian sculptor Armando Barbon with the approval of the descendants of William G. Barker. It is unique as it shows Barker in his Canadian Air Force uniform at the time he was appointed the first leader of the Royal Canadian Air Force. The statue is complete, is fully paid for and is currently resting at the Artcast foundry in Brampton, Ontario.

Notably, to expand its presence in Toronto, in 2018 the Royal Canadian Air Force commemorated William G. Barker's contribution to the Toronto Maple Leafs by retiring its consecrated Royal Canadian Air Force colours to Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment—an unprecedented act in the history of the Canadian Forces. The flags are now on permanent display at the Scotiabank Arena at its main entrance. William G. Barker was loved by the people of Toronto, borne out by the fact that 54,000 citizens turned out for his funeral - the largest ever in Toronto's history - when he was laid to rest in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

In 2024 the Royal Canadian Air Force will celebrate its 100th Anniversary - a celebration that will honour the men and women who have and currently serve in the Royal Canadian Air Force, and especially recognize its first Executive Director, William George Barker.

A suitable location for the Statue to be placed is now required along with a taxable tax receipt for the primary benefactor.

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

Member Motion MM7.6