

City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM12.1	ACTION			Ward: All
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Commemoration of the Battle of Ridgeway - by Councillor Paul Ainslie, seconded by Councillor Shelley Carroll

** 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 Councillor Shelley Carroll, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Commonwealth Ward Graves Commission to designate the final resting places of the 9 casualties of the Battle of Ridgeway who were members of the Second Battalion Volunteer Rifles of Toronto, Queen's Own Rifles with Canadian War Grave status to ensure they are properly cared for.

2. City Council request the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to add the following names of our soldiers killed in the June 2, 1866 Battle of Ridgeway in Canada's National Books of Remembrance:

Ensign Malcolm McEachren
Sergeant Hugh Matheson
Corporal Francis Lackey Lance
Corporal Mark Defries
Private Christopher Alderson
Private Malcolm McKenzie
Private John Harriman Mewburn
Private William Smith
Private William Fairbanks Tempest

Summary

On June 1, 1866 more than a thousand Fenian insurgents invaded Canada across the Niagara River from Buffalo, New York.

They were the spear-head in a planned assault for thousands of Fenians to cross the Canadian land and maritime borders with Michigan, Ohio, New York and Vermont. The Fenians, mostly battle-hardened Civil War veterans, were bent on driving the British out of Ireland by taking Canada hostage.

The battle at Limestone Ridge in the morning and the battle of Fort Erie in the afternoon of June 2, 1866 together referred to as the “Battle of Ridgeway” were the last battles fought in Ontario against a foreign invader. They were also Canada’s first modern battles and the first to be fought exclusively by Canadians and led in the field by Canadian officers.

A year after Ridgeway, a prominent veteran of the battle, Toronto schoolteacher Alexander Muir composed Canada’s unofficial national anthem “The Maple Leaf Forever”.

In 1931, the anniversary of the Battle of Ridgeway ceased to be marked as Canada’s Memorial Day when, in an Act of Parliament, R.B. Bennett’s Conservative government moved it to November 11th, the Great War Armistice Day to “harmonize” it with Commonwealth practice and officially renamed it Remembrance Day.

City Council previously made a request to the Government of Canada to designate the final resting places of the 9 casualties of the Battle of Ridgeway and add their names to the Canada’s National Books of Remembrance.

Since this request the Ministry of Veteran Affairs has advised that they do not have this authority and suggested the City Council make the request to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-63465.pdf>

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM12.1