

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Councillor James Pasternak

Seconded by: Councillor Mike Colle

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Larry Kramer on Wednesday, May 27, 2020.

An acclaimed author, playwright, and later a leading LGBTQ+ activist, Larry Kramer co-founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis, one of the most prominent organizations providing support to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Known by many as an activist who combined theatre with anger, and often through vexing and divisive rhetoric, his outspokenness played a crucial role in saving tens of thousands of lives and reshaping healthcare policy in the United States and around the world.

Though he was famously outspoken and rarely minced his words, Larry Kramer once described himself as calm and shy, having spent much of his life having a non-combative demeanor, not wading much into politics at all. However, in the early 1980s, when the impact of the AIDS epidemic began to ravage the gay community, his grief and shock turned to rage as he personally witnessed an apathetic system stigmatize a community in crisis, as many were improperly cared for, and in many cases were not admitted to hospitals at all. In one example, Larry Kramer actively criticized Dr. Anthony Fauci, who was leading the government's response to the epidemic, alleging that the screams of thousands of AIDS activists had fallen on Dr. Fauci's deaf ears. Dr. Fauci, who later became good friends with Larry Kramer, noted that "Once you got past the rhetoric, you found that Larry Kramer made a lot of sense, and that he had a heart of gold".

While most saw Larry Kramer through his combative and apoplectic public persona, those close to him remember Larry Kramer as charming and funny, having the disposition of a "Jewish-mother" as a master "shadchan" or a matchmaker, as one friend noted. Others recall that he was kind and caring, taking a vested interest in the lives of those he was closest to. The legacy he leaves behind is one of having shaped United States health policy, which had a profound impact on healthcare policy in Canada and around the world. In a 2007 radio interview on CBC Radio One, Larry Kramer noted that he did not know why this fight came to him so late in life, but added that at the very least when he dies he can die knowing that he fought a good fight.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Larry Kramer's family and friends.

June 29, 2020