

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM35.21	ACTION			Ward: 13
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Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds to fund the Creation and Installation of a Heritage Plaque to Honour Toronto Public Health - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy, recommends that:

1. City Council increase the 2021 Council Approved Operating Budget for Heritage Toronto by \$7,500.00 gross, \$0 net, for the production and installation of a Heritage Plaque a heritage plaque commemorating Toronto's Public Health History (Cost Centre: HG0001), fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained from the development 20 - 26 Lombard Street and 25 Richmond Street East (Source Account: XR3026- 3700825) in the amount \$2,844 and (Source Account XR3026-3700843) in the amount of \$4,656.

Summary

This Motion seeks authorization to amend the 2021 Operating Budget of Heritage Toronto to fund the creation and installation of a heritage plaque near Bay Street and Queen Street West in Ward 13 to recognize the history and importance of Toronto Public Health. Heritage Toronto has estimated the project to cost \$7,500.

The City of Toronto's first Medical Officer of Health was Dr. William Canniff, who was appointed to the role in 1883. At the time, infectious diseases such as cholera, diphtheria, typhus and tuberculosis were common in major cities like Toronto and medical science was only beginning to make links between poor sanitation and the spread of illnesses.

Prior to widespread acceptance that many diseases spread by germs, experts believed bad air was the cause of illnesses. Dr. Caniff's push to clear up yards cluttered with refuse and drain stagnant water was influenced in part by this belief.

Many major civic improvements that were designed to address public health issues were made during this period. By 1875, Toronto was filtering its city drinking water, sourced from Lake Ontario, in an effort to eliminate waterborne diseases. At the time, raw sewage also emptied untreated into the Toronto Harbour.

In 1884, Dr. Caniff recorded the Toronto Harbour contained rotten fruit and vegetables, dead animals and fish, in addition to raw effluent. Around this time, Toronto also began incinerating its garbage, which has previously been dumped in ravines and other fill sites.

Dr. Charles Hastings became Toronto's Medical Officer of Health in 1910. He grew the City's Public Health department into the largest in the country. Hastings was a visionary administrator who notably harnessed the power of documentary photography to draw attention to social and public health issues in Toronto.

City photographer Arthur Goss recorded living conditions in the City's poorest areas, such as the Ward, which helped make the case for preventative medicine and sanitation improvements. Hastings and Goss' landmark 1911 report on housing conditions in Toronto led to the demolition of almost 2,000 homes deemed unsanitary.

Though the work began under his predecessors, Dr. Hastings also focused on food safety, in particular the safety and cleanliness of meat and milk supplies. Hastings' daughter died after contracting typhoid from milk bought at a city dairy.

In the 20th century, as Toronto could increasingly depend on sanitary food preparation conditions, potable water in all homes, and managed waste disposal systems, the public health department initiated vaccination campaigns against infectious diseases.

In the early 20th century, Toronto launched its first vaccination campaign against smallpox. Later, as technology improved, the city vaccinated against diphtheria, polio, measles — and now COVID-19.

From the creation of the City's first public health department in 1883 to SARS and the current COVID-19 pandemic, Toronto has had to respond to many public health challenges over the last century. This Heritage Toronto plaque will focus on the work of the city's public health department in creating a safe and healthy environment for Toronto's citizens.

The enacting By-law for the development at 20 - 26 Lombard Street and 25 Richmond Street East states that 3 years following the date of the By-law coming into full force and effect, the monies may be redirected at the discretion of the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning, in consultation with the local Councillor, toward a range of local community benefits including heritage related improvements in the vicinity of the lot. The By-law came into full force and effect on December 14, 2015 and the three years have passed. Accordingly the funds that have been secured from the development at 20 - 26 Lombard Street and 25 Richmond Street East can now be used for heritage related improvements in the vicinity of the site.

As Heritage Toronto is a directly funded City agency and not considered an "outside party", no undertaking is required to be signed by Heritage Toronto governing the use of the funds and financial reporting.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM35.21