

City Council

Motion without Notice

MM47.80	ACTION			Ward: 8
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Authorization to Release Section 45(9) funds for the Production and Installation of Two Heritage Plaques to Commemorate pilots Violet Milstead and Marion Orr - by Councillor Mike Colle, seconded by Councillor Shelley Carroll

** Notice of this Motion has not been given. A two-thirds vote is required to waive notice.
* This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.
* This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

Recommendations

Councillor Mike Colle, seconded by Councillor Shelley Carroll, recommends that:

1. City Council increase the 2022 Approved Operating Budget for Heritage Toronto on a one-time basis by \$15,000.00 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 45(9) community benefits obtained from the development at 2360 Yonge Street, secured for park and streetscape improvements in Ward 8 (Source Account: XR3028-4500233), for the production and installation of two heritage plaques to commemorate pilots Violet Milstead and Marion Orr (Cost Centre: HG0001).

Summary

This Motion seeks authorization to release \$15,000 in Section 45(9) (Planning Act Reserve Account) funds to Heritage Toronto for the creation and installation of two plaques to commemorate pilots Violet Milstead and Marion Orr, two female pilots active during the Second World War.

Violet Milstead was a Toronto-born pilot and the first female Canadian bush pilot, as well as one of only four Canadian women to work in the British Air Transport Auxiliary, a civilian organization set up to ferry new, repaired, and damaged military aircraft between factories, plants, and drop off points, during the Second World War.

Violet Milstead saved money from working at her mother's shop to take flying lessons. She started in 1939 and six months later received both her private and commercial aviation licenses. Violet Milstead earned her instructor's certification in 1941 and trained military personnel and taught private citizens flight lessons at Barker Field in Toronto. In 1943 she travelled to Britain to join the Air Transport Auxiliary as they needed experienced pilots. She went with her fellow pilot, Marion Orr. She earned the rank of First Officer, ferrying equipment between factories and military sites.

She flew at least 47 types of aircraft during her Air Transport Auxiliary work, learning the controls of each kind rapidly. Air Transport Auxiliary pilots were not allowed to communicate by radio for fear of interception, so she mostly flew on instinct and experience with little more than maps and compasses through all sorts of weather. She would typically fly eight flights per day for two week stretches. Despite a workload comparable to her fellow male pilots, she was paid 20 cents less than them. She was the longest serving female Canadian pilot with the Air Transport Auxiliary.

After being discharged from the Air Transport Auxiliary in 1945, Violet Milstead returned to Canada and worked as a flight instructor again at Barker Field. She then moved to Sudbury as a bush pilot, and likely the only woman in the world teaching at a bush pilot school in the 1940's. She became a librarian and retired in 1973. She was awarded the Order of Canada in 2004. She received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 and received various other awards such as the Amelia Earhart Medal, the Paul Harris Medal and the Rusty Blakey Memorial Award.

Marion Orr was a pioneering Canadian pilot who was the first woman to run a flying school. She served with the Air Transport Auxiliary during the Second World War and was awarded the Order of Canada in 1993.

Marion Orr left home as an adolescent, and regularly watched the aircraft at Barker Field. She saved to pay for flying lessons and at Fliers Limited she met Violet Milstead, whom she flew with for many years. Marion Orr earned her private pilot's license in 1940. She worked as an aircraft inspector at De Havilland Aircraft of Canada and was the second woman in Canada to qualify as an air traffic control assistant. She earned her commercial license in 1942.

She accompanied Violet Milstead to Britain to work in the Air Transport Auxiliary. for the Second World War. She earned the rank of Second Officer and left it in 1944. She became a flight instructor at Barker Field for Aero Activities. She purchased the company in 1949, and then developed her own airfield and flying school north of Toronto in Maple (Vaughan).

In 1982 she was inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame and in 1993, into the Order of Canada.

This Motion is urgent so the work can get underway.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM47.80

(July 19, 2022) Fiscal Impact Statement from the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer
(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-228952.pdf>)