

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM28.30	ACTION			Ward: 11
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Protecting Paul Martel Indigenous Botanical Garden - by Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Councillor Paul Ainslie

** Notice of this Motion has been given.
 * This Motion is subject to referral to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Dianne Saxe, seconded by Councillor Paul Ainslie, recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the Indigenous People Garden Incorporated to lock the gate to the Indigenous Botanical Garden at Paul Martel Park between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Summary

Spadina and Bloor is a key nexus for a significant number of Toronto’s Indigenous people and organizations, including the Native Canadian Centre, and Wigwamen Terrace, operated by Ontario’s oldest and largest urban Indigenous housing provider.

Half a block away is Paul Martel Park, named for a renowned architect and pillar of the Toronto Annex neighbourhood. Paul was known for his advocacy for community green space and for his design and concept for Ecology Park, which was renamed after him in 2014.

Unfortunately, the park was then neglected. After Paul Martel’s death in 2020, Paul Richard, an Indigenous retired City of Toronto gardener, launched a revitalization. His goal was to bring together the Aboriginal community and the Annex neighbourhood to restore the ecological plantings and clean up the neglected park. In doing so, he has had the strong support of the Annex Residents Association.

Since that time, Toronto Parks staff have not maintained the plants in this park. In a unique partnership arrangement, Indigenous volunteers have devoted enormous time and effort to create an Indigenous Botanical Garden in Paul Martel Park. This has included curating, planting, and tending a wide variety of native and medicinal plants. Parks, Forestry and Recreation agreed to recognize this Indigenous Botanical Garden in appropriate signage in 2024, see 2024.IE14.13.

Recognizing the importance of Indigenous place-keeping and cultural programming, the City has repeatedly claimed that it is committed to building an ongoing partnership with Indigenous groups to enhance this park as a site for Indigenous-led training, gardening, and cultural education. See, for example, the motion at this Council to Enter a Nominal Agreement with The

Indigenous People Garden Incorporated at Paul Martel Park, which states that it aligns with the City's ongoing commitments to equity, cultural recognition, and environmental sustainability.

Unfortunately, the Indigenous Botanical Garden is being destroyed by reckless abuse, especially during nighttime hours. Although Parks, Forestry and Recreation installed a low fence with an unlocked gate, patrons exiting the adjacent bar habitually trample and urinate on the native plants, which cannot withstand such treatment.

For this reason, Paul Richard and the Annex Residents Association have repeatedly requested permission to lock the garden at night. This permission has consistently been denied, and the consequences for the garden have been devastating. It is time to recognize that this special garden requires additional protection, including being locked at night.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM28.30

(March 19, 2025) Letter from the Annex Residents' Association

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-253651.pdf>)

(March 7, 2025) Letter from Indigenous Seniors Helping Seniors

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-253652.pdf>)

(March 18, 2025) Letter from Native Canadian Centre of Toronto

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2025/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-253653.pdf>)