

NOTICE OF MOTION

Authorization to Release Section 37 Funds to Commemorate the Bathhouse Raids

Moved by: Councillor

Moise

Seconded by: Mayor

Chow

SUMMARY:

On February 5, 1981, 309 people were arrested in the Bathhouse Raids, a landmark moment in Canada's 2SLGBTQ+ civil rights movement. 200 police officers — some with crowbars and sledgehammers — raided the Barracks, the Club, Richmond Street Health Emporium, and Romans II Health and Recreation Spa, arresting owners, staff, and guests.

Officers used violence and homophobic insults during the raids, which were the largest mass arrest in the city's history at the time. The men who were arrested were criminally charged with operating or visiting a "bawdy house", a place defined by law as housing "acts of indecency." At the time, gay people faced prejudice and discrimination in Canada. Being publicly outed could mean loss of employment, damage to personal relationships, or other serious consequences.

In response, the gay community — with allies including feminist and Black activists, labour organizations, and civil liberties groups — rallied protests. On February 6, 1981, 3,000 people marched on Toronto Police 52 Division and Queen's Park. Former Toronto mayor John Sewell and community leaders like George Hislop (who was also a defendant) gave their support.

The Right to Privacy Committee, created after an earlier raid, advised and gave financial support to those arrested. Most successfully defended their charges in court, but some were convicted. The raids damaged the relationship with the queer community, friction that continues over four decades later.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. City Council increase the 2026 Operating Budget for Heritage Toronto on a one-time basis by \$10,000 gross, \$0 net, fully funded by Section 37 community benefits obtained in the development at 333 Bloor Street East, 1 Mount Pleasant Road, 575 and 577 Jarvis Street (Source Account: XR3026 - 3700137), secured for the production and installation of a heritage plaque at 231 Mutual Street to recognize the Bathhouse raids (Cost Centre: HG0001).