

MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

#MemoStrong – Rebuilding after the fire at York Memorial Collegiate Institute

Moved by: Councillor Frances Nunziata

Seconded by: Mayor John Tory

SUMMARY:

On May 6th and 7th, 2019, just weeks shy of its 90th anniversary celebration, York Memorial Collegiate Institute ("York Memorial"), located at 2690 Eglinton Avenue West, became the scene of a devastating 6-alarm fire resulting in extensive damage.

York Memorial was constructed in 1929 as a memorial to youth killed in World War I. From the 11 steps symbolizing the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, to the mural at the auditorium entrance dedicated in 1949 as a World War II Memorial, the grounds of York Memorial were, and still are, rich with history and sentiment. In 1985, York Memorial was formally designated as a property of historical and architectural value and interest under the Ontario Heritage Act. The building is monumental in character and is a landmark along this part of Eglinton Avenue West.

York Memorial was home to approximately 900 students and faculty, currently relocated to a nearby school for the remainder of the school year. It was also the site of the City's annual York Remembrance Day service and while damaged, it is an intrinsic part of the history of the community of this part of Toronto.

York Memorial students have initiated petitions that call on the Toronto District School Board to restore the school for future students. A GoFundMe campaign has been organized by York Memorial Alumni, including former MP Alan Tonks, to raise funds to go towards the cost of restoring or recreating the historical works of art that sustained fire damage.

It is important that City Council affirm its support for the students of York Memorial, the school's alumni, future students, and the Keele community as a whole for the restoration of the school and of the heritage attributes that were damaged as a result of the fire.

This motion is urgent as staff from Toronto Building and Heritage Preservation Services, City Planning should make arrangements to inspect the damage to this property as soon as possible after the site is released by the Office of the Fire Marshal.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. City Council affirm the City's interest in conserving the use, heritage values and attributes of York Memorial Collegiate Institute at 2690 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto;
2. City Council request the Chief Building Official and the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services to:
 - a. Access York Memorial Collegiate Institute at 2690 Eglinton Avenue West as soon as possible to assess the impact of the damage caused by the recent fire to this building;
 - b. Work with the Toronto District School Board to ensure that the property's cultural heritage values and attributes are conserved within any necessary site remediation, including ensuring that the TDSB retain a professional heritage consultant to inform the conservation strategy for the designated heritage property; and
3. Should the conservation strategy include any alteration, demolition or removal, City Council request the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services to report back to Council on the proposed conservation strategy and receive approval from City Council as may be required by either Section 33 or Section 34 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Date: May 14, 2019