

CITY OF HAMILTON

MOTION

Emergency and Community Services Committee: July 8, 2021

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR N. Nann

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR

Removal of the Name Ryerson from the Recreation Centre at 251 Duke Street, Hamilton (Ward 1)

WHEREAS the May 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement saw parties to the Agreement, including Canada and the churches responsible for the operations of the schools, formally acknowledge that “Canada and certain religious organizations operated Indian Residential Schools for the education of aboriginal children and certain harms and abuses were committed against those children”;

WHEREAS on June 11, 2008 then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal Statement of Apology on behalf of Canada to students of Indian residential schools, their families, and communities;

WHEREAS the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) concluded that Residential Schools were “a systematic, government-sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so that they no longer existed as distinct peoples.” The TRC characterized this intent as “cultural genocide”;

WHEREAS Egerton Ryerson held the position of Chief Superintendent of Education in Upper Canada from 1844 to 1876;

WHEREAS Egerton Ryerson advocated for the creation of the residential school system for Indigenous children when asked by the Department of Indian Affairs for his suggestions on “Industrial Schools for the benefit of the aboriginal Indian tribes”;

WHEREAS in this report Ryerson stated that for Indigenous Peoples “nothing can be done to improve and elevate his character and condition without the aid of religious feeling. This information must be superadded to all others to make the Indian a sober and industrious man”;

WHEREAS Ryerson reasoned that White and Indigenous children required different education because “It is a fact established by numerous experiments, that the North American Indian cannot be civilized or preserved in a state of civilization (including habits of industry and sobriety) except in connection with, if not by the influence of, not only religious instruction and sentiment but of religious feelings”;

WHEREAS Ryerson’s report formed the blueprint of what would become the Indian Residential School System, including his recommendations that it be administered by religious institutions and that the majority of the children’s time would be spent in labour rather than instruction;

WHEREAS authorities would frequently take children to schools far from their home communities as part of a strategy to alienate them from their families, language, culture and familiar surroundings;

WHEREAS abuse at the schools was widespread: emotional and psychological abuse was constant, physical abuse was meted out as punishment, and sexual abuse was also common. Survivors recall being beaten and strapped; some students were shackled to their beds; some had needles shoved in their tongues for speaking their native languages;

WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report provided conservative estimates that between 4,000 and 6,000 children died in the residential schools, causes of death including physical abuse, malnutrition, disease, neglect, suicide, or trying to escape;

WHEREAS the last of Canada’s residential schools closed in 1996, impacting several generations of Indigenous Peoples who share in the intergenerational effects of transmitted personal trauma and loss of language, culture, traditional teachings, and mental/spiritual wellbeing;

WHEREAS in addition to his role in the establishment of Residential Schools, Ryerson opposed the education of girls beyond elementary school, and supported racially segregated education, drafting legislation allowing for the creation of racially segregated schools that lasted in Ontario until 1965;

WHEREAS the city of Hamilton owns and operates a recreation centre that is adjoined to a public elementary school sharing the name Ryerson;

WHEREAS the city of Hamilton formally states that it is committed to creating and nurturing a city that is welcoming and inclusive where equity seeking communities will feel safe, supported and have an enhanced sense of belonging;

WHEREAS keeping the name Ryerson on the municipal recreation centre is inconsistent with the values set out in the city's vision and strategic priorities; and

WHEREAS at the June 6, 2021 meeting of the HWDSB the following motion was unanimously passed: "That In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, that an Indigenous process that is both locally relevant and responsive be struck to rename Ryerson Elementary school, through ethical engagement and in consultation with local Indigenous communities and key beneficiaries and stakeholders."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

- (a) That the City of Hamilton take all necessary steps, administrative and physical, to immediately remove the name Ryerson from the municipal recreation centre located at 251 Duke Street, Hamilton, Ontario;
- (b) That the City of Hamilton work in tandem with the HWDSB in the renaming of the elementary school/municipal recreation centre;
- (c) That the recommended name be submitted to the City's Facility Naming Sub-Committee for review and approval;
- (d) That the City's Tax Stabilization Reserve be used to fund this action; and
- (e) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to execute any required agreement(s) and ancillary documents, with such terms and conditions in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.