

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

**DATE:** 2019 May 29

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** 1650 20

**SUBJECT:** **CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES LOCAL 23  
(BURNABY CIVIC EMPLOYEES) CENTENARY**

**PURPOSE:** To provide information on the centenary of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 23 (Burnaby Civic Employees), and identify opportunities for the City to support commemoration of this anniversary.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** the Community Heritage Commission recommend Council support and assist in celebrating the centenary of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 23 (Burnaby Civic Employees) as outlined in Section 4.0 of this report.
2. **THAT** the Community Heritage Commission recommend Council issue a proclamation in September 2019 to mark the centenary of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 23 (Burnaby Civic Employees).
3. **THAT** an allocation of up to \$2,600 be authorized for expenditure from the 2019 Boards, Committees and Council budget for the civic sponsored projects and programs for this public event.
4. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the President of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 23 (Burnaby Civic Employees).

**REPORT****1.0 BACKGROUND**

At the 2019 April 04 meeting of the Community Heritage Commission, the matter of the centenary of the Burnaby Civic Employees Union was discussed. A motion was made and passed that staff report back to the committee with background on the history of the Burnaby Civic Employees Union, and to provide options for ways the City can support and assist with commemoration of the centenary.

The Burnaby Civic Employees Union is planning events and initiatives to mark the centenary, including a picnic, outreach to members, and a public event in collaboration with the Burnaby Village Museum for Labour Day. They have also allocated resources to retain the services of a researcher to develop up to ten interpretive panels to display at the Labour Day event, and other community events.

## **2.0 POLICY SECTION**

The proposed approach aligns with the following goals and sub-goals of the Corporate Strategic Plan:

- A Connected Community
  - Partnership – Work collaboratively with businesses, educational institutions, associations, other communities and governments
- An Inclusive Community
  - Create a sense of community – Provide opportunities that encourage and welcome all community members and create a sense of belonging
- A Healthy Community
  - Lifelong learning – Improve upon and develop programs and services that enable ongoing learning
  - Community involvement – Encourage residents and businesses to give back to and invest in the community
- A Thriving Organization
  - Organizational culture – Ensure that our core values are reflected in our policies, programs and service delivery

## **3.0 HISTORY OF BURNABY CIVIC EMPLOYEES UNION**

The Burnaby Civic Employees Union was created in September 1919, when it received its Charter from the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLC). The charter was transferred from the TLC to the National Union of Public Employees in 1955, and the union later became Local 23 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in 1963.

The early days of the union were marked by struggles with the Municipality of Burnaby to receive recognition for the union. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the union made efforts to have statutory holidays recognized, and to advocate for a 5-day work week. The Municipality's financial challenges during this period led to layoffs, and to employees working in rotations to spread employment and income among the workforce. Many members of the union were suspended because they were unable to pay their union dues.

During the period of economic growth in the 1940s, the union was able to secure higher wages and a closed shop. In 1956, the union and Municipality entered into a Welfare Society Sick Plan, which was a pioneering health benefit scheme created in Burnaby, and which can trace its origins to the Burnaby Employees Benefit Society which was founded in 1913.

Through its long history, Burnaby's civic employees' union became an important institution in the life of the community. Its activism and leadership in supporting workers reflected Burnaby's own working-class roots. As such, it has played a significant role in the City's development and has earned a place for recognition and celebration of its centenary.

## **4.0 PROPOSED CITY SUPPORT**

### **4.1 Proclamation**

The Community Heritage Commission could recommend that Council issue a proclamation in September in support of the anniversary celebrations. Such a proclamation could recognize the anniversary, as well as the role of CUPE 23 members in delivering services to citizens on behalf of the City, and recognition of the union movement's goals of advancing workers' rights and social justice.

### **4.2 Research and Interpretation**

City staff in Planning, Archives, and at the Museum are supporting the historical research being conducted by CUPE 23, as it advances the City's knowledge of an important aspect of Burnaby's history. Staff are providing advice and access to content and information. The Planning Department will also be providing graphic design for interpretive panels to be displayed by CUPE 23 at community events, and coordinate printing of the panels at the City Printshop. It is recommended that an expenditure of up to \$1,800 be allocated from the 2019 Boards, Committees and Council fund for the cost of printing the interpretive panels in support of public education about the history of CUPE 23 in Burnaby.

### **4.3 Labour History Choir Performance**

Staff and members of the CUPE 23 Executive have identified a labour history event planned for fall 2019 as an opportunity to commemorate the anniversary of the union and provide public education on the broader history of labour protest in Burnaby. A "Labour History Sing-a-Long" event is being planned as part of the Neighbourhood History Series (a series of lectures and walking tours organized by the Museum and the Burnaby Public Library every September and October). As part of this fall's series, a labour history choir will perform historic protest songs, interspersed by short historical presentations on significant labour events and protests from Burnaby's past. Audience members will receive a songbook to sing along. It is recommended that an expenditure of up to \$800 be allocated from the 2019 Boards, Committees and Commission fund for the event in support of public education about the community's significant history of working class activism.

## **5.0 NEXT STEPS**

With Council adoption of the recommendations of this report, City staff will advance the work outlined in the report. As such, it is recommended that the Community Heritage Commission and Council approve the recommendations contained in this report.



E.W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING