



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: May 21, 2025

Report Number: SRCS.25.08

Department: Community Services

Division: Public Works Operation

Subject: **SRCS.25.08 - Mahsa Jina Amini, Memorial Tree and Bench**

Purpose:

To propose a location and advise of timing for planting a tree and installing a bench with memorial plaque to commemorate the anniversary of Mahsa Jina Amini's death and support the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRCS.25.08 be received;
- b) That a tree and bench with memorial plaque be installed in the green space adjacent to the Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre to commemorate the anniversary of Mahsa Jina Amini's death and support the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement.

Contact Person(s):

Frank Quarisa, Director of Public Works Operations, extension 2935

Tracey Steele, Commissioner of Community Services, extension 2476

Report Approval:

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the report's approval are attached.

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Key Messages:

- In 2022, Mahsa Jina Amini was detained by Iranian police for allegedly wearing her hijab incorrectly. When she passed away in custody on September 16, 2022, her death became one of the triggers for “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests around the world.
- On October 1, 2022, an estimated 50,000 people walked from Hillcrest Mall, north along Yonge Street, to lands at the southwest corner of Major MacKenzie Drive and Yonge Street, in support of freedom, human rights, and equitable treatment of women in Iran.
- The green space adjacent to the Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre is recommended as the site for installation of a tree and bench to commemorate the anniversary of Mahsa Jina Amini’s death and support for the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement.

Background:

On September 16, 2022, a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Jina Amini passed away after being arrested and detained by Iran’s morality police for allegedly not wearing her hijab correctly. Her death, along with the deaths of other women under similar circumstances, sparked the “Women, Life, Freedom” movement.

On October 1, 2022, an estimated 50,000 people walked from Hillcrest Mall, north along Yonge Street, to lands at the southwest corner of Major MacKenzie Drive and Yonge Street, in support of freedom, human rights, and equitable treatment of women in Iran. A gathering and speeches then took place at the David Barrow Civic Square and municipal parklands outside the Central Library and Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre. This is believed to be the largest demonstration rally of any kind to have taken place in Richmond Hill.

On September 6, 2023, in solidarity with Iranian Canadians in the call for freedom and democratic rights for all and equality for women in Iran, Council directed that:

Staff identify the appropriate location to plant a tree and install a bench with memorial plaque to commemorate the anniversary of Mahsa Jina Amini ‘s death and support the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement, and report back on the timing for installation.

Discussion:

Staff have assessed City-owned lands along the October 1, 2022 demonstration route and gathering area and have determined a suitable location for a commemorative tree and bench within the green space adjacent to the Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre (Figure 1). Convenient parking is available nearby at both the Aquatic Centre and Central Library to accommodate visitors.

The tree will be planted in spring (May or June) for best planting conditions and the bench will be installed over the summer so that the entire memorial is in place in advance of the anniversary of Mahsa Amini’s death on September 16, 2025.

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Figure 1: Proposed location for dedication tree and bench with plaque within the green space located next to the Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre.

Financial Implications:

The total cost to install a dedication tree and bench with memorial plaque, is approximately \$4,700. This amount includes all materials and staff time. The cost can be accommodated within the Public Works Division's 2025 operating budget. As such, there are no additional financial or staffing implications associated with this report.

Relationship to Strategic Plan 2024-2027:

The planting of a tree and installation of a bench to commemorate Mahsa Jina Amini and support the Women, Life, Freedom movement aligns with Pillar 2, Focusing on People, specifically, Priority 3, supporting Richmond Hill's unique character and sense of community through programs, services, and events. Honouring Ms. Amini's life in this way fosters a sense of belonging and recognition for the Iranian Canadian community, and reinforces the City's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and cultural representation within Richmond Hill's multicultural population.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCS.25.08 - Mahsa Jina Amini, Memorial Tree and Bench.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Apr 17, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Frank Quarisa - Apr 16, 2025 - 1:44 PM

Tracey Steele - Apr 16, 2025 - 3:43 PM

Darlene Joslin - Apr 17, 2025 - 9:23 AM