

HERITAGE TORONTO PLAQUES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT HERITAGE TORONTO

Heritage Toronto is an arms-length, charitable agency of the City of Toronto. We are a registered charity and not-for-profit that receives a portion of its operating funding from the City of Toronto.

ABOUT THE PLAQUES PROGRAM

The Heritage Toronto plaques program is one of the oldest, longest running, and most active municipal plaques programs in North America. Started in 1969, the program has more than 900 plaques on permanent public display in the Toronto. Each year, we complete approximately 20 to 30 new plaques. Two staff run the program.

WHAT DOES THE PLAQUE FEE COVER?

Heritage Toronto charges a fee to produce all its historical plaques. We are a not-for-profit and the fee is regularly reviewed to ensure it covers our expenses: the writing and research required to produce the text, manufacturing of the plaque, installation by our contractor, and a contribution to a maintenance fund. As a charity, we do not charge HST on our services.

WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

Applicants can apply for a plaque without payment; however, staff are unable to work on plaques that are not funded. Payment is due following review and acceptance of the application by program staff.

WHAT MAKES FOR A STRONG PLAQUE SUBJECT?

Toronto staff look for the following in plaque subjects:

- A strong connection to Toronto
- A suitable location in a publicly accessible area
- A surprising or little-known subject or narrative
- Service to under-represented or under-served communities
- A subject or narrative that is not already featured in the Heritage Toronto plaques program
- At least 10 years since the event being commemorated (if applicable)
- At least 2 years since the death of the person being commemorated (if applicable)

Our staff reserve the right to refuse plaque applications deemed unsuitable for any reason.

WHO WRITES THE PLAQUES?

Creating a plaque text is a collaborative process that involves thorough research, consultation with stakeholders, and discussion with historical experts. Ultimately, the finished text must be clear, engaging, and meet Heritage Toronto's written style and public education guidelines.

We provide applicants opportunities to provide feedback during the drafting of the text, however Heritage Toronto is ultimately responsible for approving the final wording. As experts in historical interpretation, Heritage Toronto retains the right to final edit of all plaques in the rare event of a disagreement over wording.

WHAT DO PLAQUES SAY?

Plaques are for the education of the public, Toronto residents, and visitors to the city. The language will assume no knowledge of the subject. We work hard to ensure historically marginalized narratives are included in our plaque texts. Readers should leave with a clear overview of the subject.

WHAT ARE PLAQUES MADE OF?

Heritage Toronto plaques are made from cast bronze or porcelain enamel. The bronze plaques, which are always in our distinctive oval shape, are text only. The porcelain enamel plaques can include full colour images in addition to text. Both plaques carry the City of Toronto coat of arms.

WHO OWNS THE PLAQUES?

Heritage Toronto retains ownership of all its plaques and is responsible for their maintenance. A percentage of each plaque fee is placed in a maintenance fund, which ensures all our plaques are kept in a state of good repair and free from harmful errors.

Heritage Toronto's ownership ensures plaques remain on public display in perpetuity, as intended, and can be repaired and replaced, if necessary. Heritage Toronto also owns and is responsible for plaques produced by the former Toronto Historical Board.

WHAT IS A LEGACY BLUE PLAQUE?

Legacy Blue plaques are for people of great distinction who made Toronto their home. These plaques contain the name of the person, their birth and death dates, a brief descriptor of their occupation or achievement, followed by the phrase "lived here" and the range of years in which they lived "here."

A second sentence describing their work may follow. Stated in 2010 by the Toronto Legacy Project in partnership with Heritage Toronto, it had installed over 60 plaques by 2023. Approval of any proposed plaque is shared by both partners.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO PRODUCE A PLAQUE?

Generally, the bigger the plaque, the longer it takes to produce. Assuming prompt payment, most enamel plaques (i.e. those with images) and large bronze plaques take about 8 to 10 months from application to completion, which includes 6 to 8 weeks for manufacturing. Small bronze plaques can usually be completed within 2 to 3 months.

WHICH PLAQUES GET UNVEILED?

Each year, Heritage Toronto produces approximately 30 to 40 new plaques. Unfortunately, we can't commit to organizing an unveiling ceremony for each plaque due to limitations on staff time. Heritage Toronto may be able to support community-organized unveilings by loaning equipment.

WHERE DO PLAQUES GET INSTALLED?

Plaques should be installed in a location that is accessible to the public, 24/7, in a place that is relevant to the plaque subject. Plaques may be placed on private property if public access is not restricted. Heritage Toronto plaques may be installed on public property with the appropriate permit.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT:
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