

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Mayor Miller

Seconded by: Councillor McConnell

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Mrs. Sylvia Kathleen Searles on December 23, 2008.

Kathy was a much-loved leader in Toronto's Black community and was committed to improving the lives of young people of all races. She approached the role of mentor to her community in a way that led people to their own vision, understanding and wisdom.

Mrs. Sylvia "Kathy" Searles was born 83 years ago in Barbados and moved to Toronto in 1945. She became an active member of the Negro Citizenship Committee, which was instrumental in pressuring the Canadian government to open its borders to people from the Caribbean. She was also active in the Toronto United Negro Association, the Toronto Negro Credit Union, the Home Service Association, the British Methodist Episcopal Church and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. In 1967, Kathy became a founding member of Caribana. In 1968, she founded the Canadian Ebonite Association (CEA), which provided educational, cultural and heritage programs for Black youth. Through the CEA, she established a youth choir and formed an award-winning majorette and drum and bugle corps. She also sponsored the first Black Cotillion Ball ever held in Toronto. As a volunteer, she worked with the school boards to provide after school upgrading programs, Saturday morning heritage programs and parent education meetings. The North York Board of Education honoured Kathy with a Black History poster which listed her achievements. Over the years, Kathy received a number of awards in recognition of her hard work, dedication and incredible contributions. In 1975, she received the Interdenominational Women's Service Award for her service to the Toronto community. She has also been honoured by the Congress of Black Women, Caribana Cultural Committee, Emancipation 150, Barbadian - Canadian Association and the St. Michael's Alumni Association. The Kathy Searles Scholarship, established by the St. Michael's Alumni Association, which she helped to found, has been awarded to 30 first year college and university students. The Applause Institute established an Escort of the Year Award in Kathy's name. Articles on Kathy appeared in the books Black Women in Canada, Who's Who in Black Canada and in Chatelaine magazine.

Beloved by her husband of 61 years, Edsworth M. Searles, her three daughters, Kathleen, Marjorie and Sylvia, her two granddaughters Trina and Davleen and her two sons-in-law, David Bailey and Kenneth Elam, Kathy is also mourned by her brothers, sisters, in-laws, a host of nieces, nephews, great and great-great nieces and nephews and the thousands of people whose lives she touched. Kathy will be greatly missed by everyone who had the opportunity to meet her.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Mrs. Sylvia Kathleen Searles' family.

January 27, 2009