

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam

Seconded by: Councillor Mike Layton

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Alexandra Wojciechowski-Dodger on October 16, 2011.

Alexandra was not only a remarkable young woman, but an example to everyone of a full, engaged life. She was a tireless and tenacious advocate for social justice, a scholar whose intellect was matched only by her sharp wit and a dear friend to an extensive network she was never too busy to support.

Born in Etobicoke in 1983, and raised by her mother and grandmother, she spent four years at Martingrove Collegiate before graduating in 2001 with high honours after spending her final year of high school at Silverthorn Collegiate.

She had an insatiable appetite for engagement with her community. Her constant search for ways to contribute to discourse, justice, and awareness led her, in her first eight months at the University of Toronto to write for campus newspapers, campaign successfully to bring U of T students into the Canadian Federation of Students, and at the end of her first year, win an election to become the representative of the entire undergraduate population of U of T as the External Commissioner of the students union. In her 4 years of participation with the student movement, she helped establish Ontario's first tuition fee freeze, was instrumental in the negotiation of a Toronto-wide TTC discount for postsecondary students, helped lower health plan fees for U of T undergraduates and was twice elected as the Ontario Representative to the national executive of Canadian Federation of Students, working full time to represent over 250,000 students across Ontario and over one-half million across Canada.

Yet advocacy in these years stretched far beyond the student movement. After she left her position with the CFS, she campaigned for the NDP, put together two provincial conferences of the party's youth wing, helped to organize the massive protests in Toronto which helped keep Canada out of the Iraq war, and never lost her cool.

Revelling in the richness of stories and the lessons offered by her undergraduate degree in history (minoring in Irish and Celtic studies and Middle Eastern Studies), Alex pursued an M.A. in history at McMaster, winning two national awards for her research in labour history and completing a thesis focused on early birth control advocacy in Canada. Along with her work as a teaching assistant and her on-campus activism at McMaster, she simultaneously served as the President of the Trinity-Spadina New Democratic Party riding association, helping to elect Olivia Chow to parliament for the first time.

At 23, having done more than many can claim to have accomplished in a lifetime, Alex moved to

Montreal to begin studies in law at McGill University. There, she quickly solidified a reputation as an outspoken activist, a powerful and prolific writer, and preternaturally capable advocate for a variety of causes, courageously choosing to advocate for the human rights of Palestinians.

While earning impressive academic credentials, she also became a writer with the *McGill Daily*, won the honour of a position with the *McGill Law Journal*, and organized events with the McGill Human Rights Working Group. As a member of McGill's team at the Jessup moot competition, she finished 2nd place in Canada and earned the Dillard prize for the team's written submissions in the international legal advocacy competition.

Yet this was only her first three years of study. In her summers, she worked for legal aid Ontario here in Toronto, interned at a human rights organization in the Palestinian territories, and clerked at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. Over the last twelve months, she worked as a *stagiaire* at an international law firm in Paris and spent a term of law school at the Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis in Brussels.

In May, Alex graduated from McGill University with degrees in common and civil law and, in August, took up a prestigious position as the Public Interest Law Fellow at Amnesty International in Ottawa, contributing to litigation and advocacy on public international law, the protection of refugees, the promotion of civil liberties, the status of First Nations and the defence of human rights. Her most recent work, assisting in efforts to have Canada prosecute George W. Bush for war crimes, was the subject of significant media attention.

Amazingly, throughout her years, Alex also demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to her personal relationships and her family, never forgetting a birthday and never turning down an opportunity to provide help during times of trouble and always going out of her way to assist those closest to her. She also knew how to enjoy life: travelling extensively and hosting dozens friends during her time in Europe. Yet she never took the privileges she had earned through her hard work as an entitlement, but rather as an obligation to work even harder for a better world.

In the early morning of October 16, 2011, Alex was struck by a car while returning to her home in Ottawa. She passed away en route to hospital.

As a friend, student, lawyer and activist Alex was extraordinary. Indeed, the impressiveness of her achievements is dwarfed by the superlative power of her character. Her closest friends note that she not only had an analytical mind and the spirit of a fighter but also the heart of a poet. To her closest friends and to all of those who knew her, her life's work and her spirit will always be an inspiration.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Alex's family.

October 24, 2011