

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Mayor John Tory

Seconded by: Councillor Mike Colle
Councillor Josh Matlow

The Mayor and Members of Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of former Councillor Anne (nee Trick) Johnston on Wednesday, June 26, 2019 at the age of 86. Former Councillor Johnston served on the pre-amalgamated City of Toronto Council, the Municipality of Metropolitan Council, and finally the Toronto City Council for nearly 30 years in total.

Councillor Johnston was often cited as the “Dean of Council” in her later years.

Like the majority of Toronto’s citizens, Councillor Johnston was an immigrant whose formative years were spent in her beloved birth country of Wales. Born in 1932, Councillor Johnston grew up during the time of sacrifice and rations in World War II UK. Both Councillor Johnston and her sister Heather Morgan were inculcated with a deep sense of civic duty, fairness and justice by their parents and extended family in their small Welsh town of Neath. Their father, was a highly-regarded Headmaster who supported the local Welsh miners. Their mother believed firmly in the education of women. Consequently, Councillor Johnston moved to London in her late teens to complete her formal education and graduated from one of the first graduating classes in Occupational Therapy. Soon after obtaining her degree, Councillor Johnston set sail for faraway places, and more specifically Australia via Montreal. However, upon reaching Montreal, Councillor Johnston became Head of Occupational Therapy at the Royal Victoria Hospital at the age of 24. She had also met the man who would become her husband, Malcolm Johnston, with whom she would go on to have 5 children.

Councillor Johnston moved with her husband and first child from Montreal to Ottawa, and finally with two children from Ottawa to Toronto where they settled in 1960. After a brief time in the then Borough of Etobicoke from 1962 to 1966, Councillor Johnston and her husband moved back into the City of Toronto and into a home on Cortleigh Boulevard.

The move back to Toronto, coincided with Councillor’s return to paid employment as an Occupational Therapist working at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre. It reignited in her a passion for the disenfranchised citizens of Toronto, and sparked an interest in alternative approaches to health care that remained a passion for the rest of her life. She also developed enormous respect for the dedicated health professionals with whom she worked at that time.

In the early 1970’s Councillor Johnston became engaged with the work of her local Ratepayers Association, and in particular in opposition to a monolithic residential development which was threatening the fabric of her family’s Toronto neighbourhood. In 1972, backed by her “Kitchen Cabinet” of exceptional local women and a grassroots campaign, Councillor Johnston was elected as an “Alderman”. Her commitment to the political process was ignited and remained lit

well after her departure from politics in 2003. Councillor Johnston was eternally grateful for the assistance of those early supporters among women like Joyce Trim, Judith Bell, and Carol Jamieson who became her lifelong friends. Her home had a poster which read: “Behold the turtle, SHE makes progress only when SHE stretches her neck out”. Councillor Johnston stuck her neck out.

Councillor Johnston inadvertently rode into an exceptional political career spanning almost 30 years on a wave of change which was rooted in a community-based opposition to unbalanced development proposals threatening many of Toronto’s neighbourhoods.

During that time, Councillor Johnston learned to appreciate the unpartisan potential of municipal politics and that friendships and respect can grow even where political dissent exists when each party is committed to respect for the other opinion and the democratic process which brought those differing views together.

Councillor Johnston appreciated that while her view may not always prevail, vigorous debate and discussion were always possible. Moreover, respect for the right to differing opinions was essential to the democratic process and best outcomes.

Councillor Johnston came to trust and rely on the opinions of City Staff. She respected the political process even when she disliked the outcome.

During her almost 30 years of public service, Councillor Johnston’s views evolved as the City evolved, but she always maintained that Toronto owed their citizens a participatory, community based, live-ably integrated, work/live, developmentally balanced, park and ravine filled, culturally enriched and diverse, accessible, walkable, rideable city.

She was an early advocate for bike lanes, curb cuts, green spaces, walking paths, community-based health care and policing, public transportation based solutions, and sustainable development across the city which could be absorbed into their respective communities in a liveable way. Councillor Johnston recognized the increasing pressure on the City and its resources. She sought creative sustainable solutions to those increasing pressures.

Her commitment to community continued into her 80’s with her political activism at her farm. She continued to be an interested, engaged, and an engaging member of her community.

The City Clerk is asked to convey, on behalf of Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Anne Johnston’s family, some of whom are in attendance today.

July 16, 2019