

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Councillor Joe Cressy

Seconded by: Councillor Paula Fletcher

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of dedicated social justice champion Ho Sze Chow.

Ho Sze/Mrs. Chow/Mama Chow/Auntie/Ama/Aiya passed away peacefully at Mount Sinai Hospital on the evening of February 11, 2020, a day after her 92nd birthday, surrounded by people who loved her, including her daughter Olivia Chow and son Andre Chow.

Ho Sze Chow is survived by her daughter Olivia, son Andre, grandchildren Sarah Layton (Hugh Campbell), Mike Layton (Brett Tryon), Althea Chow (Ryan Liddell) and great-grandchildren Beatrice, Solace, Phoebe, Chloe, Kian and Sage and predeceased by her husband, Wai Sun Chow, and son-in-law, Jack Layton.

Born in the lunar Year of the Tiger in the Shunde District of Guangdong province in China, she lived true to her tiger spirit throughout her lifetime – a tiny, fearless woman who stood up to injustice wherever she found it. As a teenager, Ho Sze survived the Japanese invasion of China by smuggling oil and sugar so she could feed her brother. After serving with the Chinese army, she later fled the war-torn country of her birth, and went to Hong Kong to seek new opportunities.

In 1970, Ho Sze and her husband Wai Sun Chow immigrated to Canada with Olivia and settled in Toronto, to provide a better life for their daughter. Life was extremely difficult. Wai Sun could not find work in his field, and Ho Sze became the main family breadwinner, working as a hotel maid, where she witnessed first-hand how immigrant women in Canada are so often exploited. She was subjected to racist slurs, difficult working conditions, and poor pay. Ho Sze channeled her fierce sense of injustice and turned it into action. To gain better treatment and working conditions, she and her union went on strike, marching in freezing conditions on the picket line and defending themselves by taking on the scab workers brought in by the company.

Later in life, Ho Sze defended women's reproductive rights, by counter-protesting at the blockaded Morgentaler abortion clinic in Toronto. She was outraged and shouted in Cantonese at the anti-choice protesters blocking the clinic's entrance, describing what it was like to have watched women die from back alley illegal abortions in Hong Kong. Ho Sze questioned how they dared demand a reversal of rights that would cause so many women to suffer in the way she had witnessed.

Ho Sze always took great interest and pride in the political pursuits of her daughter Olivia, late son-in-law and former NDP Leader Jack Layton, and grandson Mike Layton. For many years, she read three Chinese newspapers every day and was always more than happy to provide very

colourful commentary (and her strategic advice) on municipal and federal politics.

After a long day at work, Ho Sze would return home to manage the entire Layton-Chow household. Without her support: shopping, cleaning, and cooking for the entire family, Olivia and Jack (until his tragic early death) could not have immersed themselves in their social justice work for twenty-five years.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Ho Sze Chow's family and friends.

February 19, 2020