

Expression of Condolence for Irving Abella by Toronto City Council

Moved by: Mayor John Tory

Seconded by: Councillor James Pasternak

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Irving Abella, C.M., O.Ont, a historian, author, academic and university professor, who passed away on July 3, 2022. Irving passed away after a long illness and just one day after his birthday, at the age of 82.

Born on July 2, 1940, Irving Martin Abella was raised in Toronto and earned his Bachelor of Arts, Masters and PhD degrees at the University of Toronto where he met Rosalie Silberman – a retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada who would become his wife.

From 1968 until his retirement in 2013, Irving worked as a professor at York University specializing in labour and Jewish history. In the early 1970's, Irving was a pioneer in his field, who established the first ever Canadian university Jewish studies course. Throughout his career, Irving served in many roles including as Chair of Canadian Studies, J. Richard Schiff Chair for the Study of Canadian Jewry, President of the Canadian Historical Society, President of the Canadian Jewish Congress, and as a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Irving's most impactful work, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*, co-authored with Harold Troper, detailed Canada's exclusionary immigration policies towards European Jews during World War II, who were fleeing to find refuge from the Nazi regime. The book helped to shape the country's immigration policy in the early 1980's, at a time when Canada accepted tens of thousands of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Irving was awarded a number of honours including the Order of Canada, the Order of Ontario, and was also a recipient of the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals.

Irving is survived by his wife and children and will be remembered as a loving husband and father whose work positively influenced national policy.

The City Clerk is asked to convey, on behalf of Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to his wife of 53 years, Rosalie Sliberman Abella, his sons Jacob, Zachary and their families, his grandchildren Felix and Maysie and the many friends, and members of the Jewish community and beyond, whose lives he touched.

July 19, 2022