

Expression of Condolence for Gordon Lightfoot by Toronto City Council

Moved by: Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie

Seconded by: Councillor Jaye Robinson and
Councillor Mike Colle

The Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of a Canadian music icon and one of our most beloved musicians, Gordon Lightfoot CC, OOnt, on May 1, 2023 at the age of 84.

Gordon Lightfoot was born in Orillia, Ontario, and performed on local radio and in regional music festivals as a child performer. In 1955, while in high school, he wrote his first song, later moving to Los Angeles to attend music college. Gordon returned to Toronto in 1959 as a choral performer, dancer and folk singer, with a solid grounding in music theory.

When he became active as a singer and songwriter in Toronto's folk-music scene in the 1960s, Gordon cited Bob Dylan as his musical inspiration. In 1966, he released a debut album, *Lightfoot!*, with two instant classics: *For Loving Me* and *Ribbon of Darkness*. A few years later, Gordon's single *If You Could Read My Mind* made him an international success. Over the next six years, he released some of his best known songs: *Beautiful, Sundown, Don Quixote, Carefree Highway, and Rainy Day People*.

In the course of a remarkable career spanning almost six decades, Gordon Lightfoot won 17 Juno Awards, was nominated for 5 Grammy Awards, and was recognized by his peers by being inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame, the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame and the US Songwriters Hall of Fame. Lightfoot and his songs became synonymous with the best in Canadian music, reflecting our country's history, geography, and stories like few others. He was promoted to Companion of the Order of Canada in 2003.

Gordon Lightfoot's music impacted countless musicians who chose to record his songs, including legacy artists like Peter, Paul and Mary, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Barbra Streisand, Anne Murray, and Bob Dylan – and a younger generation of artists such as

Blue Rodeo, Billy Bragg, the Tragically Hip, Belinda Carlisle, the Rheostatics, Jane's Addiction, and Ron Sexsmith.

Throughout his life, Gordon Lightfoot maintained unbreakable bonds with Ontario and Toronto. His longtime residence remained in this city, and he was frequently seen at Toronto music venues, checking out touring acts and emerging local artists alike. His annual concerts at Massey Hall – from the mid-1960s until last year – were legendary. Gordon was the last artist to perform on Massey's stage before it closed temporarily for renovations in 2018, and the only choice to re-open the Hall in 2021.

He was presented with a Key to the City in acknowledgement of his 170th Massey Hall performance in that year, and November 25, 2021 was proclaimed Gordon Lightfoot Day in Toronto.

Gordon Lightfoot's work continues to inspire and influence folk, rock and country artists here at home and around the world. His unique musical legacy will continue to be a cultural touchpoint for our city and far beyond.

The City Clerk is asked to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy and deepest condolences to Gordon's wife Kim, his children, Fred, Ingrid, Galen, Eric, Miles, Meredith, his grandchildren and family members, and all those whose lives he touched through his music. He will be greatly missed.

May 10, 2023