

Expression of Condolence for Bernie Pitters by Toronto City Council

Moved by: Councillor Mike Colle

Seconded by: Councillor Josh Matlow

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Bernie Pitters on December 9, 2023, at the age of 68.

Bernie was born in Birmingham, England, and at the age of eight, moved to Jamaica, where he studied at St Michael's Primary School and received a scholarship to attend Excelsior High School. It was in high school when Bernie's musical journey began. He was taught how to play the keyboard by his classmate Earl 'Wyre' Lindo, who went on to play with Bob Marley and the Wailers. Upon completing high school, Bernie joined the Super Fenders Band and later, the Otravis Band which eventually came to Canada on tour.

Bernie fell in love with Canada on a visit in 1976 and moved to Toronto, studying organ with Jackie Mittoo. It was Bernie's passion and dedication which was instrumental in growing and shaping the Canadian Reggae scene, making him a trailblazer and an inspiration to generations of artists after him.

Over the years, Bernie lent his great talent to many bands as a keyboard player. He left the Otravis Band and became a member of Ishan People Band, where he joined Johnny Osbourne who was lead vocalist. Bernie went on to join the Leroy Sibbles Band for ten years, and later went on to become a keyboard player with the legendary Toots and the Maytals and toured with the band across the world twice per year for ten years.

In addition to his passion for performing, Bernie enjoyed producing music in the studio and recorded with numerous artists including R Zee Jackson, Leroy Artist Brown with Sly and Robbie, Jay Douglas, Blessed, Treson, and worked with Friendliness and Human Rights.

Bernie's significant contributions to music have been recognized through numerous awards. He holds the record of receiving the most awards given to an individual – a total

of 20 - by the Canadian Reggae Music Awards. In 2015, he became one of the first three inductees into The Toronto Reggae Hall of Fame.

Bernie's warmth and humour will be remembered by all who knew him, and his influential legacy on the local Reggae music scene and making Toronto into an important part of the international Reggae community will never be forgotten.

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

December 13, 2023