

Expression of Condolence for Marcelo Puente by Toronto City Council

Moved by: Councillor Alejandra Bravo

Seconded by: Councillor Paula Fletcher

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Marcelo Puente.

Marcelo was an artist and cultural leader with a profound commitment to social justice. Born in Chile, he was a student of architecture when the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende was overthrown in 1973 by a brutal military coup. In 1974 he found refuge in Toronto and would become a cherished Davenport resident.

Marcelo began writing original songs and poetry, as well as setting the works of other poets to music shortly after his arrival in our city. He formed a group that performed locally in the mid-1970s, before co-founding the celebrated Chilean Greek band, *Compañeros*. This band and the Trojan Horse Coffee House on Danforth became an important focus of Toronto's multicultural scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Canadian folk music impresario Gary Cristall, who first heard *Compañeros* at the Vancouver Folk Festival, later called them "Canada's first world music band."

During a return to Chile in the 1980s, Marcelo collaborated with musicians in the cultural resistance that would eventually contribute to the fall of the dictatorship. In Canada he continually mentored, composed, and recorded with various local musicians.

Marcelo's body of work includes compositions for films, documentaries, plays, and children's books. His songs have been translated into English, French, Italian, and Greek, and one is preserved in the National Archive of Immigrant Songs. In late 2025, he published *Otro día amanece/Another day dawns: The Book of Songs*. In this bilingual collection of stories and lyrics, he leaves yet another cultural legacy of solidarity and hope for all Canadians.

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

June 24, 2026