

Public tribute for Tovey

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Jim Tovey was a rock star, plain and simple.

Whether he was holding a microphone belting out a Rolling Stones tune or shoving his infamous iPad into the face of anyone who would listen, boasting about plans for Mississauga's waterfront redevelopment, Tovey commanded attention.

Even before he was elected to council in 2010 to serve the constituents of Ward 1, the "long-haired ponytail hippie" had done more for the community than most people had done in a lifetime.

Sadly, on Jan. 15, the tenacious and animated councillor passed away in his vehicle while driving home from a planning and development committee meeting. He was 68 years old.

"He was one of those authentic people. It's a quality really hard to find these days, but Jim had it in spades," said Mayor Bonnie Crombie during a public tribute held at city hall on Wednesday.

A bouquet of white flowers

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Friends, colleagues celebrate councillor's life

● Continued from front

and a framed photograph of Tovey, were placed at his seat in council chambers, while colleagues and friends shared memories of the former Citizen of the Year.

Ontario Finance Minister and MPP for Mississauga South Charles Sousa shared his story of meeting Tovey for the first time in 2006, sporting the renowned ponytail.

"The Four Sisters were still alive and well," recalled Sousa, referring to the smoke stacks of the Lakeview Generating Station.

Tovey had approached him with a petition calling for the province to demolish the power plant and restore access to the city's waterfront.

"Jim's vision, his tenacity, his desire to see that could be a destination for future generations is what really drove the inspiration," said Sousa.

With the help of the Lakeview Ratepayers Association, University of Toronto professor John Danahy and Sousa, among others, the plant was destroyed in 2007 to make way for what will become a vibrant, sustainable, mixed-use community.

Dubbed Inspiration Lakeview, the proposal was just the beginning of Tovey's ambitious vision to redevelop huge swaths of land in south Mississauga, including the Imperial Oil lands and marina lands in Port Credit.

"He had a million ideas, most of them with a big vision and a matching price tag," quipped city manager Janice Baker. "We've had Inspiration Lakeview and Inspiration Port Credit, and I think when you think of Coun. Tovey, the word that comes to mind is inspiration."

An insatiable learner with a passion for music, the arts and his community, which he lovingly referred to as Ward "1-der-ful," Tovey had an infectious optimism about the future of Mississauga.

But, as much as he focused on the big picture, Tovey never lost sight of the little things in life.

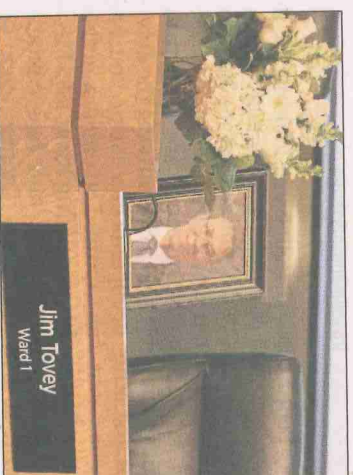
Ellen Timms, general manager of the Port Credit Business Improvement Association (BIA), said when her daughter passed away, the BIA board of directors sought to dedicate a tree in her honour at Port Credit Memorial Park.

"Jim walked that park for hours, trying to find the tree and the right location, and that touched me so much," she said.

Coun. Chris Fonseca shared a similar story of when her father, who also shared a love of music, passed away suddenly, and Tovey came to her home to chat with her two sons about their grandfather's musical legacy and how it would live on through them.

"I'm deeply saddened by the immense loss of my friend, our friend, our colleague," she said.

Elected to Mississauga city council and



Byron Johnson/Metroland

Councillors held a public tribute for recently deceased Coun. Jim Tovey, who died while driving home from a planning and development committee meeting on Jan. 15.

Region of Peel council in 2010, Tovey served on the Credit Valley and Toronto and Region conservation authorities, as well as the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, dedicated to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the Great Lakes.

He was named Citizen of the Year in 2009, and won the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 2012 for his work in championing a sustainable waterfront.

Known as the Lakeview Waterfront Connection, Tovey sought to create a naturalized conservation area that would provide much-needed green space for the proposed mixed-use communities of Inspiration Port Credit and Inspiration Lakeview. It would essentially become a green oasis in the heart of the city.

Using rubble from demolition projects, Tovey and his team worked to create 26 hectares of new land around the old power plant site, stretching to Marie Curtis Park in Toronto. This land will form the foundation for a state-of-the-art waterfront recreation project.

"When you create new land, you have to name it," noted Coun. Nando Iannicca. "Just think of the beauty of honouring him with the name of the land that he created as part of the Lakeview Generation Trust at the foot of Port Credit, forever looking out."

Discussions will take place in the coming months on potential monuments or memorials. But, what is certain is the need to move forward with Tovey's plans for the waterfront redevelopment, to ensure his legacy will live on for future generations.

"Well done thy good and faithful servant, Jim Tovey," said former mayor Hazel McCallion, who was in attendance for the tribute. "I'll miss you, Jim. Everybody will miss you. But, to miss you is one thing. To make sure your vision and your challenges that you undertook will be completed is how we can pay tribute to you."

A private service will be held by the family, with a Celebration of Life to be announced at a later date.