

In Memoriam - Donald Sobey, C.M.

Memo from President's Office <MESSAGE-FROM-THE-PRESIDENT@LISTS.DAL.CA>

on behalf of

President's Office <president.messages@DAL.CA>

Thu 3/25/2021 3:28 PM

To: MESSAGE-FROM-THE-PRESIDENT@LISTS.DAL.CA <MESSAGE-FROM-THE-PRESIDENT@LISTS.DAL.CA>

MEMORANDUM

To: The Dalhousie University community

From: Deep Saini, President and Vice-Chancellor

Date: Thursday, March 25, 2021

Re: **In Memoriam — Donald Sobey, C.M.**

With great sorrow on behalf of Dalhousie, I am extending condolences to family and friends of Dr. Donald Sobey (LLD'89). Donald was an influential business leader, a celebrated philanthropist and an unwavering supporter of Dalhousie for more than three decades. He died on March 24 at age 86. Campus flags are lowered in respect.

The legacy Donald leaves at Dalhousie will have a profound impact on our campus, research, faculties and students for years — even generations — to come.

Donald was from Stellarton, N.S. He cared deeply for his community and it may have been his small-town roots that kept him modest and people-centred in the world of corporate titans.

He graduated from Queen's University in 1957 and his belief in the transformational power of education never wavered. Donald created scholarships at multiple post-secondary institutions, hoping some would reach young people who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to continue their education.

One of four children of Sobey's founder Frank H. Sobey, Donald was president of Empire Company Ltd., the parent company for Sobey's, from 1969 until he was appointed chair in 1985. During that time, he played a key role in expanding the regional supermarket into a national chain. He became chair emeritus in 2004. His corporate and charitable board roles included serving as chairman of the National Gallery of Canada and Maritime Tel & Tel, and director of the World Wildlife Fund.

At Dalhousie, Donald served on the Board of Governors from 1997–2001, chaired the Campaign for Dalhousie in the 1980s and was honorary chair from 2009–2012 of the Bold Ambitions Campaign Leadership Council (Atlantic Region). His exceptional generosity to Dalhousie included supporting the Campaign for Dalhousie (1980s), the Computer Science Building Fund (1990s), the Dalhousie Art Gallery, and the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation's Irene MacDonald Sobey Endowed Chair in Curative Approaches to Alzheimer's Disease.

In 2011, the [Sobey Fund for Oceans at Dalhousie](#) — a partnership between the Donald R. Sobey Family Foundation, Dalhousie's Marine Affairs Program and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Canada — began developing

a conservation legacy for oceans, specifically by funding scholarships and work placements. Recently, Donald contributed funds essential to creation of the Restorative Lab in the Faculty of Law.

A passionate collector and promoter of Canadian art alongside his son, Rob Sobey, Donald chaired the Sobey Art Foundation. In 2002, this foundation created the Sobey Art Award, considered to be one of Canada's most prestigious award for artists.

He received many awards in his lifetime. Donald became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2013 for his philanthropy and entrepreneurship. He also received the Queen's Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012) and was inducted into the Canadian Business Hall of Fame with his brother, David Sobey, in 2007. Donald and David received the Retail Council of Canada's Canadian Grocery Industry Grand Prix Lifetime Achievement Award (2019) on behalf of their family.

Called wise, kind, funny and a wonderful friend by those at Dalhousie who knew him personally, Donald gave generously of his time, energy and resources. He leaves behind his wife, Beth, three children and five grandchildren. We will be forever grateful for his vision and commitment to making Dalhousie a better university and Canada a better country.

Due to Covid-19, private services are by invitation only. A celebration of life will follow in the future.

Sincerely,

Deep

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Deep Saini

President and Vice-Chancellor

Dalhousie University

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Follow Deep Saini on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.