

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL TESTIMONIAL DINNER & AWARDS

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Honouree Biography



THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM G. DAVIS

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Former Premier of Ontario. 1971 - 1985.

Mr. Davis was the fifth consecutive Progressive Conservative to hold this office since 1943. He immediately set his own style through a complete reorganization of government structures, using the administrative skills and thorough knowledge of government acquired during 12 years as a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. Davis was a Member of the Ontario Legislature from 1959 to 1985. He was appointed Education Minister in 1962 and added the University Affairs portfolio two years later. Under his guidance, Ontario's education system underwent major change. Among his wide-ranging accomplishments in education were the creation of Ontario's Institute for Studies in Education and the establishment of Ontario's widely respected community college system. As Premier, Mr. Davis combined a business-like approach to the running of government with a sensitive understanding of the needs and aspirations of the people it serves. Social services were greatly expanded at the same time as the process of government was reorganized and streamlined. Technological initiatives, the key to Ontario's future prosperity, were fostered during his Premiership. During the early 1980s, he initiated centres dealing with robotics, biotechnology and computer applications to manufacturing.

A proud Canadian and a dedicated federalist, Mr. Davis is rightfully proud of the role he played in negotiating Canada's constitutional accord. His statesmanlike approach did much to promote the spirit of compromise that made the agreement possible. On April 17, 1982, Mr. Davis was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

In further recognition of this accomplishment, on April 9, 1986 the Governor General of Canada, the Right Honourable Jeanne Sauve, invested Mr. Davis as a Companion of the Order of Canada at a ceremony held at Government House in Ottawa.

From March 1985 to March 1986, Mr. Davis served as Canada's Special Envoy on Acid Rain. During the course of that assignment, carried out at the request of the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Davis worked with his American counterpart to produce a report which represented significant progress on this important environmental issue.

On May 6, 1987, Mr. Davis was among the first of 20 citizens to be honoured with an investiture in The Order of Ontario presented by Lieutenant-Governor Lincoln Alexander at a ceremony in the Legislature of Ontario.

On February 23, 2001, Mr. Davis was inducted as a Knight in l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur at a ceremony conducted in Toronto by His Excellency Mr. Denis Bauchard, Ambassador of France in Canada, acting on behalf of the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Davis was born in Brampton on July 30, 1929; he attended local schools, the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall and was called to the Bar in 1955. He practised general law with a Brampton firm until his first election in 1959. In the Ontario Legislature, Mr. Davis represented Peel, Peel North and Brampton. He retired as Premier and as a member of the Legislature in 1985.

Mr. Davis was Counsel at Torys LLP, in Toronto from 1985 to 2010.

Mr. Davis has been awarded Honorary Degrees by eight Ontario Universities, as well as the Yeshiva University of New York, the National University of Ireland and the University of Tel Aviv. In 2007, the 40th year of the Community College system in Ontario, Mr. Davis has been honored to receive Honorary Diplomas from George Brown College, Fanshawe College and Humber College. Mr. Davis is married to the former Kathleen Mackay; they have five children: Neil, Nancy, Catherine, Ian and Meg and twelve grandchildren.