

## Paul Gérin-Lajoie 1920 - 2018

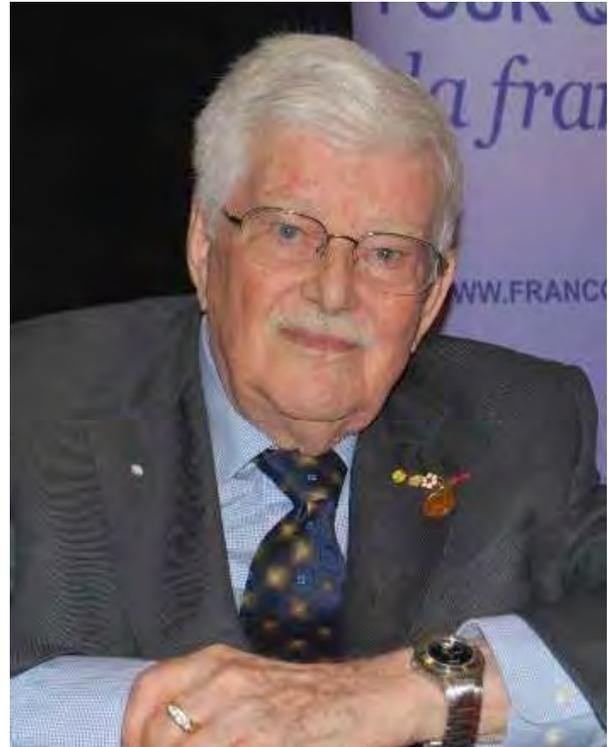
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**P**aul Gérin-Lajoie was a leading political figure during Québec's 'Quiet Revolution' in the sixties. His work transformed Québec's educational system from ecclesiastic to secular and orchestrated some of the province's first international-relations policies.

Paul was born in 1920 in Montreal to a prominent family. He obtained his Law degree from the Université de Montréal in 1942 and was admitted to the Québec Bar a year later. In 1948, he received a Doctorate of constitutional law at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, then returned to Québec to practise law. To counter the nationalistic positions of his local newspaper, he founded the weekly *L'Écho de Vaudreuil-Soulanges et Jacques-Cartier* in 1957, in which his wife, Andrée, wrote a column for women.

After three unsuccessful federal campaigns, he was elected as a provincial member of the Legislature representing Vaudreuil-Soulanges in 1960. He immediately served as Minister of Youth and, in 1964, became Deputy Premier and Québec's first Minister of Education, holding both positions until 1966. During his mandate, he secularized the educational system, ensured that all Quebecers had access to free public education, improved teacher training, established the secondary education network, and made it mandatory for Québec Youth to attend school until age 16. In 1967, he created CEGEPs, a unique post-secondary educational system, and in 1968 he established the Université du Québec. Parallel to this, he was a pioneer in the Francophonie concept, developing lasting ties with several French-speaking countries.

He left politics in 1970 to be President of the Canadian International Development Agency until 1977. Under his leadership, Canada's annual budget for international development grew from \$350 million to over \$1 billion. He then established the Paul Gérin-Lajoie Foundation, with the main



objective of helping children in poorer countries get access to quality education. In 1969 and 1970, he was a visiting professor at the University of Ottawa and, from 1970 to 1975, at the Université de Montréal. He was also the founding Chairman of the International Trade Committee of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal (CCMM), which gave birth to the Montreal World Trade Centre, and the first President and CEO of the Old Port of Montreal Corporation. The latter transformed the disused port facilities into a park and cultural developments along the St. Lawrence River.

Gérin-Lajoie received close to 40 awards and honours, including 13 honorary doctorates. He was made a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1979 and became Grand Officer of the National Order of Quebec in 1998. A Montreal high school was named in his honour. He died in June 2018 at the age of 98, a few months after his wife.