

# Trailblazer, bridge-builder, Victor Goldbloom dies at age 92

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The doctor, MNA, and former commissioner of Official Languages, Victor Goldbloom, has died of a heart attack.

Goldbloom was born in Montreal in 1923 and followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a pediatrician in the 1940s.

He worked in New York at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Centre before returning to Canada and joining politics in the 1960s.

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Goldbloom was first elected in 1966 as the MNA for D'Arcy McGee, and became the first Jewish cabinet minister, serving Premier Robert Bourassa as Minister for the Environment.

He was later Municipal Affairs Minister, and the Minister responsible for ensuring the 1976 Olympics began on time.

He resigned from provincial politics in 1979, when Claude Ryan became leader of the Liberal party, and from 1991 until 1999 was Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages.

Goldbloom received multiple awards for his citizenship and his efforts to build connections between Jews and Christians.

He was a Companion of the Order of Canada, an Officer of the National Order of Quebec, and received honorary degrees from several universities.

The Quebec Community Groups Network established an award in the name of Goldbloom and his wife Sheila for those who contribute to understanding English-speaking Quebec.

In 2012 Pope Benedict XVI appointed him a Knight of the Order of St. Sylvester for his work promoting inter-religious understanding.

## Building Bridges

Last year Goldbloom finished his memoir, entitled [Building Bridges](#).

In his memoir, Goldbloom recounted what it was like to grow up as a Jew in Montreal.

"I had the good fortune that my father was a successful physician," Goldbloom told CTV Montreal last June. "There was a lot of exposure to music and theatre and things of that kind and I was very fortunate."

## PHOTOS



Victor Goldbloom

Montreal in pre-WWII era was quite different than it is today.

"Crescent Street was doctors, 75 doctors between Sherbrooke and Ste. Catherine and my uncle was an ear nose throat doctor, my father had his office in our house. That that was a traditional thing," said Goldbloom.

He said that growing up in that compartmentalized society, where religion and class defined opportunities, encouraged him to break down barriers and although it did lead to conflict, people were grateful after the fact.

Goldbloom said that was particularly important in the years after Bill 22 and Bill 101 place restrictions on the English language and education, and after the Parti Quebecois came to power.

"People are more respectful without sharing the other person's viewpoint, and somehow, I maintained a courtesy in my communications with Parti Quebecois members that people now tell me they appreciated," he said.

Despite his many accomplishments, Goldbloom's son Jonathan said his father was most proud of appearing in Sports Illustrated.

"He was an avid baseball fan, and a subscriber to Sports Illustrated throughout his life, and then he made it into Sports Illustrated because of the Olympics, I think was the piece de resistance for him," said Jonathan.

He is survived by his wife Sheila, their sons Michael, the principal of Bishop's University and former publisher of the Montreal Gazette, Jonathan, president of the communications firm Jonathan Goldbloom and Associates, and daughter Susan, co-founder of Knowledge in the Public Interest, four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and his brother Dr. Richard Goldbloom.

A funeral will likely take place Friday.