

The Liberal Voice

In Memoriam

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The newsletter of the Ottawa-Vanier Federal Liberal Association

PRIME MINISTER SPEECH AT FUNERAL FOR MAURIL BÉLANGER

By the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
(as delivered at the funeral service on August 27, 2016)

Ma très très chère Catherine, chers membres de la famille Bélanger, madame la Secrétaire générale de la Francophonie et ancienne gouverneure générale du Canada, messieurs les présidents du Sénat et de la Chambre des communes, madame la lieutenant-gouverneure, madame la première ministre, monsieur le maire, premier ministre Clark, Maureen, collègues parlementaires, mesdames et messieurs des membres du corps diplomatique, mesdames et messieurs les députés provinciaux et conseillers municipaux, monseigneur, chers amis. Merci de me donner l'occasion de vous faire part de mes réflexions sur la vie et l'héritage de notre ami Mauril Bélanger.

Mauril savait très bien que la grande force du Canada était dans sa diversité et que au Canada les identités s'additionnent fièrement. On pouvait être fier Acadien et fier Canadien, fier Africain et fier Canadien et cette belle addition d'identités était si bien représentée dans son comté d'Ottawa-Vanier et à travers le pays. Mais il savait aussi célébrer le cœur de son identité propre. Il nous le rappelait régulièrement.

As you know, and as Mauril knew well, I identify strongly as a proud Quebecer. That's where I spent a good part of my life as a young person. It's where I chose to go to school. When the time came for me to enter political life, it just made sense that I would represent my home town of Montreal. And so you often hear me describing myself as a proud Quebecer because that's how I see myself. But Mauril, of course, was able to take a slightly different take on things. He never

passed an opportunity to remind me that I was born in Ottawa which technically and truly makes me a Franco-Ontarian.



We'd joke about it but, you know, I never corrected him on that point because I know that for Mauril, for so many and, yes, even for me, being a Franco-Ontarian was a source of tremendous identity and pride, and there are few higher compliments from Mauril than to be included in those ranks.

Mauril était très exigeant envers lui-même et envers ses collègues parlementaires. Pour gagner sa confiance et son respect, il fallait toujours travailler très fort. Mais une fois cette confiance et ce respect obtenu, Mauril nous accordait aussi son amitié. Un véritable don qui signifiait beaucoup pour moi et pour tous ceux qui

ont eu la chance de le connaître et de l'apprécier. Mauril laisse un héritage qui traversera les époques. Il a représenté Ottawa-Vanier pendant plus de 21 ans, ce qui constitue un accomplissement extraordinaire et qui montre bien à quel point il rejoignait effectivement les gens qu'il servait. Il les écoutait et il veillait aussi à ce que le parlement entende leurs préoccupations. Et même si pour plusieurs Ottawa-Vanier est considéré comme une circonscription libérale gagnée d'avance, Mauril a toujours refusé de prendre quoi que ce soit pour acquis. Il travaillait sans relâche pour aller aux plus d'événements possible et pour rencontrer le plus de gens possible même si on était à des années des prochaines élections.

D'ailleurs, pendant la dernière campagne et alors que j'étais occupé à traverser le pays d'un bout à l'autre, Sophie est allée aider Mauril à faire du porte-à-porte. C'est ainsi qu'elle a su découvrir cet homme merveilleux et généreux qu'il était mais aussi ce comté dont il était si fier. Mais le problème c'est que quand elle revenait elle me disait « les gens sont biens, ils adorent Mauril ». Je dis « oui pis comment ça va ? ». « Ah Mauril est très inquiet. La campagne va pas bien, il faut travailler plus fort, il a peur qu'il va perdre son comté ». J'ai dit « Sophie, Mauril va pas perdre son comté ». Elle a dit « non, non, non, écoute, il est très inquiet ». J'ai dit « Sophie, Mauril est toujours inquiet et il gagne toujours ». Effectivement, il a gagné par 24 000 voix. Encore une fois la confiance.

Mauril ne cherchait pas à être à l'avant-scène. Il a choisi de servir sa communauté en travaillant sans relâche, avec fierté mais aussi en sachant mettre de côté la partisanerie. Il était efficace, il menait ses combats avec ferveur, mais toujours dans le respect.

TIMING IS ALL IN POLITICS AS IT IS WITH FRIENDSHIPS

By the Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Conservative Senator from Saskatchewan
The Ottawa Citizen, Published on August 17, 2016

Mauril Bélanger took on his battle with ALS as he did other challenges – straight on, fiercely and with determination to squeeze from every moment one more opportunity to serve.

The Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, which he and I co-chaired, will remain one of his most significant legacies. He understood politics;

And there are many more Canadians – generations to come – who may not know Mauril Bélanger by name but who will celebrate his commitment to equality and inclusion every time they stand up in their classrooms or at a hockey game and sing our national anthem in both official languages of course.



To my dearest Catherine and to all members of Mauril's family, know that the thoughts of an entire nation are with you. Your grief for the loss of the man who loved you so completely is unique, but we share in your sadness.

To Mauril, I will say again what I told him while he was among us, that he was a brave and brilliant Parliamentarian. The House of Commons will not be the same place without you.

Au nom de Sophie, de ma mère Margaret qui a été une commettante fidèle pendant de nombreuses années et de nos enfants, au nom de la famille parlementaire et au nom de tous les Canadiens, merci Mauril pour ton amitié, pour ton travail, pour tout ce que tu as donné afin de faire du Canada et du reste du monde un endroit meilleur pour tous.

Merci cher ami.

I knew Africa. We agreed that the overlooked relationship was the parliamentary link.

So began a more than 12-year journey to work with African parliamentarians and our Canadian colleagues in strengthening governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights. The association challenged Parliaments to do their

part to stop violence in elections, as well as against minorities. It raised the issues of women, children and those living with disabilities. Most of all, Canadian Parliamentarians could speak to their counterparts as partners.



Strong of stature and voice, Mauril did not shy away from confronting a president who wanted to change a constitution, or addressing a government on the need to tackle the plight of people with albinism.

Moments best remembered are the looks of Parliamentarians in Africa, when he advised them of what it is like to move from government to opposition – lessons in democracy. He forged a strong bond with African ambassadors and

assisted them in their role of translating the difference of 54 unique countries, rather than a vague concept of Africa.

He was at his best in reminding Parliamentarians of their role with their constituents and often used examples from his own riding, Ottawa-Vanier, which he served for more than 20 years.

The images of Mauril on his last trip, struggling to walk, without voice – but with a new one by machine – and with purpose was puzzling to some of our colleagues overseas. It quickly turned to a lesson of commitment, no matter what the adversity.

From different parties, perspectives and experiences, members of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association will continue their work as a tribute to Mauril's tenacious battle for the inclusion of Africa in Canada's international relations.

As for the personal friendship, it was forged along treacherous roads as well as through the issues. The road taken to Africa was just good timing, with a healthy dose of self-deprecating humour.

His goals for strengthening the Canada-Africa relationship will go forward.

COHEN: MAURIL BÉLANGER, THE MOST DECENT MAN IN POLITICS

By Andrew Cohen

The Ottawa Citizen, Published on August 17, 2016

In 1972, Pierre Elliott Trudeau visited North Bay, Ont. There he addressed a school assembly. Afterward, students were selected to pose questions to the prime minister.

One was Mauril A. Bélanger of Mattawa, Ont. He was 17 years old. Trudeau was impressed. "You're going into politics," he told the young man.

And so he did. President of the Student Federation at the University of Ottawa. Assistant to the Minister of Transport. Chief of Staff to the Chair of Regional Council of Ottawa-Carleton.

Member of Parliament for Ottawa-Vanier for 21 years. Chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Opposition critic. Parliamentary secretary. Minister of the Crown.

This was a political animal. This was a man wrapped in the rough vestments of politics, it seemed, from birth – blooded in its rhythms, bruised by its harshness, and barred, in the end, from the job he wanted most.

And yet as much as Mauril was a political being, he wasn't. Not really. For all his time in politics, he was unchanged by it. He was without artifice, guile, pomposity or pretense. He was the rarest of birds today: a politician without ego.

May I say this? In 38 years observing the game, I never met a politician like Mauril Bélanger. In our age of self-promotion, he was an emblem of modesty. He knew restraint and respect. He practiced both.

Politics changes people. They develop a swagger. They talk only about themselves. Some

lose their sense of humility; some their sense of humour.

Not Mauril. For example, it was never “my riding” to him; it was “the riding I represent.” The possessive was a conceit he could not abide.

I came to know and love Mauril over the last 15 years, until his catastrophic end on Tuesday to a wasting, unsentimental disease. Never – never – did I see anyone other than the unassuming Mauril as he worked quietly for his causes – Africa, national unity, co-operatives, minority rights, young people. Or enjoyed his pleasures – wine, custom-crafted cufflinks, his wood-fired pizza oven.

Ultimately, he was the most decent man in politics.



But he was no Pollyanna. You don't win eight elections if you're made of sugar candy. He could brawl and he could be stubborn.

Disappointments, yes. He wanted to be in cabinet longer than he was. He was sometimes restless with his portfolios as critic; great as his commitment was to official bilingualism, he did not want to be its mascot.

Shut out of cabinet, he set his eyes on Speaker of the House. When we discussed that prospect the night of the election last October, his face lit up as only it could – like a roman candle. That he

was denied this prize at the very moment he could taste it was a cruelty worthy of Shakespeare.

His last campaign was a struggle. At all-candidates meetings he gamely pushed out the words. As he soldiered on, his body in revolt, we noted that the Conservative candidate – a pipsqueak named David Piccini – did not even bother to show up.

When Mauril learned that he had ALS, he carried on. To Africa, with his loyal fellow traveller, Sen. Jim Munson. To the Commons as Speaker for the day, a rare honour, and back again to champion his bill on a gender-neutral national anthem. It was not “his legacy,” as some say, just one of the grace notes he wrote to Canada.

We lunched at the parliamentary restaurant before Christmas. Mauril invited my son, Alexander, whom he had brought into politics at age nine, as a volunteer at his campaign headquarters. At 15, Alexander, with Mauril's encouragement, was elected to the riding association.

Was it too much, I wondered, to ask Mauril to sustain a conversation over lunch? So I asked colleagues – including Bob Rae and Randy Boissonnault – to drop by. Both can talk. But there was Mauril as I would like to remember him – kind, funny, effervescent. We were joined by Catherine, Mauril's brave, buoyant and clever wife, who has been a heroine in managing his long goodbye, at home, with grace and dignity.

Mauril liked to read science fiction, but I keep thinking of him in poetry, particularly the words of Edna St. Vincent Millay:

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah my foes, and oh, my friends –
It gives a lovely light!

Mauril, you burned for a better Canada. You had no foes, only friends. And, dear friend, you gave a lovely light.

IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR BOSS...

By Alexandre Mattard-Michaud

I have personally known Mauril for many years, but worked with him as his Chief of Staff from November 2008 until his passing in August of this year. Mauril was not the first elected official I worked for in my career, but he certainly was the most upright and the sagest.

He once told me: "In order to be successful in life, one must work hard, be honest and never take anyone or anything for granted". Naturally straight forward in everything he said, Mauril would always tell you the truth... whether you liked it or not. He was a man of his word, that I must say. He also had a strong character,

showed great leadership qualities and was a guy who rarely turned down a challenge, as long as it was for a good cause – which earned him the respect of his peers and Ottawa-Vanier's constituents alike. Thoughtful and respectful in every way, Mauril was indeed a true gentleman. Moreover, he was a man with a heart as big as a mountain.



MORE THAN A BOSS

By Danick LaFrance

Back in 2006, I was a youth searching for an opportunity to work on Parliament Hill. Being a political junkie, I was determined to find a place. That search brought me to the office of a man I only knew through the media. Being a francophone from New Brunswick, I knew he was a strong ally of language minority rights. That man was former Minister Mauril Bélanger, the honourable Member from Ottawa-Vanier. I was nervous to stand in front of such a personality. I nervously looked around and saw a painting depicting an Acadian flag. He looked at me and said “comment ça va petit Acadien”? I was automatically calm and after responding to some questions and a conversation, I left.

I got that job and at the time I had no idea I would still be in the office of the Honourable Mauril Bélanger in 2016. It was quite a ride. A stressful ride at times as in all political offices, but an

Remembering Mauril Bélanger, P.C., M.P.

By Tony Stikeman, President, Ottawa-Vanier Federal Liberal Association

I first “met” Mauril in the winter of 1994-95 when he was preparing to leave his job as Chief of Staff to the Regional Chair in order to run for the federal Liberal nomination in Ottawa-Vanier. The

I have learned a lot from him over the years, a lot of good things – namely about the eternal quest to find a proper balance in one's life. The very last thing he told me before completely losing his voice after being diagnosed with ALS late last year is something I will never forget: “Remember that before career, fame or fortune, the most important things in one's life are health and family. Without these two, nothing is possible”. I will always remember and take heed in these words of great wisdom.

After eight years of working with Mauril, he became much more than just a boss to me... he was family. I will always cherish the memories of our numerous discussions about politics, about life, about working for the greater good and endeavouring to build a better world.

May you rest in peace, my dear boss. Your legacy will endure, your memory will live on in our hearts.

Merci pour tout!

overall good and enriching ride. Mauril taught me so much about politics and government and the good impact they can both have on the community and on individual people. Without knowing it he was a fabulous teacher. In addition, he was a man with great intellect. He also taught me about loyalty which is essential in politics. He was a real fighter and an inspiration for me and for so many others. Even in the face of extreme adversity, he showed strength and determination. A man who showed me the importance of helping others and a man who genuinely cared about others. Mauril would take the time to calmly listen and engage in respectful debate with his political foes.

With the passing of the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, I lost more than a boss. I lost a mentor and a friend!

Rest in peace my friend.

more I listened, the more I became comfortable and the more I realized he was the candidate we needed. Little did I know how his life and career

would make such a lasting impact on our community, on our city and on our country.

Mauril was a rare breed of professional politicians. He was basically non-partisan, he was selfless and without ego, he never sought the limelight and virtually ignored the media. He preferred to concentrate on accomplishing things and getting on with the next project instead of drawing attention to his wins. And wins there were - plenty of them.



Mauril was extremely bright, principled, focused, direct and compassionate. He was a wonderful man to work for and with. He had a work ethic that demanded attendance and active

participation seven days of the week, frequently double-booking without complaint. When he sunk his teeth into a project, he never let up. When he realized the Harper government was going to largely ignore the 50th anniversary of the Canadian flag, he researched Canada's national flags and then assembled the history onto a poster which he printed and presented (often personally) to every elementary and high school student in Ottawa-Vanier.

His approach to public life over 21 years struck me as truly remarkable. He took his job seriously as a problem-solver and a service provider, available to all regardless of race or religion or citizenship. He was guided by fairness, universal access and accountability. He admonished anyone who referred to Ottawa-Vanier as "his" riding, reminding them how fortunate he was to represent Ottawa-Vanier in Parliament. During his last campaign as his health began to deteriorate, he refused all entreaties to rest and pace himself because he didn't take any votes for granted and he didn't want any voters to question his commitment.

He set the bar very high and will be sorely missed. We have lost a very good man and a very dear friend.

Farewell, my friend!

By Vijay Tejuja, Past President, Ottawa-Vanier Federal Liberal Association

On a sad day in late November 2015, the Honorable Mauril Bélanger informed me that he had been diagnosed with ALS, and that he had two to four years to live. That terrible news was a shock for my family and I. Mauril was not only my M.P. with whom I worked for many years on the Liberal Association, he was also a dear friend of the family. This visit was extremely touching for a friend who was announcing that soon he would not be with us anymore. Mauril's illness was extremely aggressive and we could see almost week by week its awful progress as his body, but not his brilliant mind, started to shut down. After suffering for nine months, he was finally in peace on August 15, 2016.

Many have eulogized the man, the politician, the fighter for the community, but also the family man, and the true friend we have lost. I was honoured that he and his devoted wife Catherine developed profound links of friendship with our family. We also collaborated within the Liberal Association to

ensure that Ottawa-Vanier remains a Liberal seat and that the community could avail itself of the exceptional man and politician that Mauril was. People loved him for he was true: his integrity was total. During his twenty one- year career as M.P., he fought many fights and won many of them. In spite of repeated successes, he was modest and emphasized others in victories.

Mauril accepted people as they are. He welcomed and promoted the Canadian diversity - a vision which we both shared. He established strong ties with a multiplicity of ethnic groups. Every time Mauril considered the person he was dealing with as a credible and respectable human being...and it showed. People know when they meet a genuine individual. Together, we collaborated sincerely on matters related to the promotion of the Association and the role it should play in the community. I was touched by his will to persevere and work as long as he could, even without voice, and then, without mobility.

It is said that the good die young. In his passing, Ottawa-Vanier lost its favourite son and I lost my friend and mentor. The English version of O

Canada which he proposed to promote gender equality was his ultimate legacy. How fitting! Farewell, my dear friend! Rest in peace.

The Honorable Mauril Joseph Adrien Jules Bélanger, P.C., M.P., June 15, 1955 – August 15, 2016

By Michel Tadros

A. The community:

Mr. Bélanger was elected Member of Parliament for Ottawa-Vanier on February 13, 1995, and reelected in 1997, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2015.

- He provided direct assistance to Ottawa Vanier's constituents on immigration, taxes, citizenship, employment, housing, pensions, etc. He assisted 11,000 people throughout the years.
- He created strong links with the very diverse ethnic communities that live in Ottawa-Vanier: the Haitian, Hispanic, Indian, First Nations communities.
- He regularly hosted coffee chats in various part of the riding to meet with constituents.
- He regularly attended community associations' Annual General Meetings.



B. Member of the House of Commons:

Mr. Bélanger was very active during his parliamentary career:

- Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage; Chief Government Whip; Member of the Board of Internal Economy.
- Over 21 years, he was a member of numerous committees, such as: Official Languages; Scrutiny of Regulations; Special Committee on Co-operatives; Library of Parliament; Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; Public Accounts; Transport; Infrastructure and

Communities; Industry, Science and Technology.

- Honorary Speaker of the House of Commons: appointed in December 2015 and occupied the Chair on March 9th, 2016.

C. Member of the federal Cabinet:

A member of the government led by Mr. Paul Martin, Mr. Bélanger held several portfolios:

- Minister responsible for Official Languages (July 2004 – February 2006)
- Minister for Internal Trade (May 2005 – February 2006)
- Associate Minister of National Defense (July 2004 – February 2006)
- Minister responsible for Democratic Reform (July 2004 – May 2005)
- Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (December 2003 – February 2006)

D. Achievements over the years:

Mr. Bélanger was involved in:

- The Canadian Unity Rally of October 27, 1995 in Montreal.
- The launch of *LA NOUVELLE SCÈNE* in the spring of 1999, creation of a theatre venue for Franco-Ontarian productions gave new momentum to Ottawa's Francophone artistic community.
- The launch of a book drive for Aqsaaniit School in Iqaluit: over 25,000 books were flown to Nunavut in May 2000.
- Provided government assistance for Ottawa's Convention Centre which opened its door in the spring 2011.
- Created and co-chaired the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association (CAPA).
- Established the Jean-Luc Pépin Chair in Canadian Public Policy at the University of Ottawa.
- Established October as Islamic History Month to recognize the important

contributions of Canadian Muslims to Canadian society.

- Vigorously promoted Canada's official languages:
- Arranged for Canada to return *The Marriage Feast at Cana*, a painting by the 16th-century Italian master Giorgio Vasari, to the Hungarian nation; also assisted the Hungarian community in erecting a monument commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian revolution.
- Led the fight to oppose the construction of another inter-provincial bridge and then supported a plan to study the feasibility of a tunnel from the McDonald-Cartier Bridge to the Queensway.
- Planned the development of the Rockcliffe Base lands.
- Created a Community Centre for First Nations People in Ottawa-Vanier, the Wabano Centre.
- Designated Beechwood Cemetery as a National Cemetery;
- Led the campaign to protect and redevelop the Montfort Hospital.
- Developed post-secondary educational facilities in Ottawa-Vanier.
- Co-chaired Canada at 150: this reflective debate of the Liberal Party of Canada was held in Montreal from March 26 to 28, 2010.
- Co-chaired the organizing committee of the Biennial Liberal Convention 2012 and Co-chaired the Convention held in the new Ottawa Convention Centre in the riding of Ottawa-Vanier, January 13 to 15, 2012.
- To distribute the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medals, Mr. Bélanger established an independent selection committee that reviewed the many candidacies submitted from Ottawa-Vanier based on merit criteria. Thirty medals were awarded.
- Led the campaign to fund Monestime Scholarship for excellence for the Haitian Community, renamed Scholarship Mauril Bélanger.
- Mr. Bélanger became in 2012 the Liberal Advocate for Cooperatives. He moved on May 30, 2012, that the House of Commons appoint a Special Committee to consider the role of co-operatives in Canada and to identify areas where the

federal government can improve and give them greater support.



- Printed and distributed posters to students across Ottawa-Vanier to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Canadian flag in 2015.

E. National Anthem.

On September 22nd, 2014, Mr. Bélanger tabled in the House of Commons Bill C-624, *An Act to Amend the National Anthem Act (gender)*.

- The purpose of the Bill was to replace the words "thy sons" with "of us" in the English version of the national anthem in order to eliminate any gender distinction. Mr. Bélanger wanted to pay tribute to all the women who have worked and fought to build and shape the Canada that we know today. The sole purpose of the Bill was to include Canadian women and at long last, honour their sacrifices and contributions.
- Bill C-624 was defeated on April 29, 2015 in what was the first vote on such an initiative since 1980.
- The Bill was presented again on January 27, 2016 as Bill C-210. It was approved on June 15, 2015 in Third Reading. Bill C-210 is now in the Senate.

F. Defender of public servants.

Mr. Bélanger came to the defense of federal public servants every time the majority Conservative government introduced legislation aimed at reducing the rights and benefits of federal public servants, such as:

- Opposed cuts in the Public Service: 19,200 jobs eliminated in the 2012 Flaherty budget,
- Opposed Bill C-4 which represented a 50-year setback in the progress of federal public service union rights.

- Opposed the Public Service Sick Leave System in 2014 claiming to “reform disability and sick-day entitlements”.

G. Achievements related to charitable activities:

Mr. Bélanger was involved in many charitable activities.

- The construction of *Maison Fraternité*, a residential treatment centre for young drug addicts which was finished in June 2012 and houses 5-6 youths aged 13 to 18.
- **United Way Champion:** He agreed to be one of eight campaign champions that made the community more aware of the United Way’s three focus areas: Growing Up Great, Belonging to Community and Turning Lives Around.
- **United Way Ottawa’s Ambassador of the Year Award.** Every year, United Way Ottawa recognizes achievements of people who made positive change happen in the community: at its 2013 Community Builder of the Year Awards Gala, Mr. Bélanger received the Ambassador Award for his active role on several community projects over the years, such as Project S.T.E.P., a program designed to improve Ottawa’s capacity to support young people battling addiction.
- **Co-chaired the *All Party Party* for three years.** This annual event is a non-

partisan, non-profit celebration to thank the staffs of the House of Commons, Senate and Library of Parliament who help make Canada’s Parliament run smoothly. Funds raised during the event are given to charities.

H. Honours:

- Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal (2002).
- Commandeur de l’Ordre de la Pléiade (2005).
- Officer of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary (2007).
- Recognition by the Royal Canadian Legion for his contribution to the development and comradeship (2009).
- Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012).
- Community Builder of the Year Award from the United Way Ottawa (2013).
- Ordre national Grand-Croix “Honneur et Mérite” of the Republic of Haïti (2016)
- Prix Bernard-Grandmaitre (2016).
- Cooperatives and Mutuels Canada Achievement Award (2016).
- Award for Outstanding Contribution to Co-op Housing from CHF (2016).
- Médaille du 22 mars from the Montfort Hospital (2016)
- Boréal Award from the FCFA (2016).
- Communicator of the Year Award from the Ottawa Chapter of IABC (2016).
- National Honorary Spokesperson for the ALS Walk in spring 2016.