



Jewish community lost one of its most faithful servants with the passing of the Honourable Herbert Marx.

He served Quebec with great distinction as a law professor, politician and judge and he made an unparalleled contribution on Quebec's legal system. Marx was the province's first Jewish justice minister and attorney general. He offered a [unique lesson in modesty](#) for anyone who had the privilege to know him. He took great pleasure in recalling one of his first jobs selling Dickie Dee ice cream and eventually going on to work as a door-to-door encyclopedia and Bible salesperson.

Ultimately, Marx chose a different path as he went on complete graduate studies at Harvard University law school and for many years thereafter taught constitutional law at the Université de Montreal.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Marx applied his extensive knowledge of the law toward the promotion of civil rights and the advancement of social justice. Through his involvement in the Jewish community and his regular interaction with faculty and students at the Université de Montreal, he was uniquely positioned to foster understanding and collaboration across communities with the objective of enhancing human rights for all Quebecers. In 1975, he was named a commissioner on the newly formed Quebec Human Rights Commission.

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At the invitation of provincial Liberal leader Claude Ryan in 1979, he entered Quebec politics as the member for the predominantly Jewish riding of D'Arcy-McGee. He represented his constituents with great dignity during the 1980 referendum on Quebec sovereignty. During the 1980s, Herb Marx was a tireless advocate for social justice and devoted much attention to issues of gender equality and prison reform. But it was the politics of language that dominated debates over the course of that decade.

Marx once said it took a "tough hide" to survive the political turmoil of those times. With the victory of the provincial Liberals in 1985 under the leadership of Robert Bourassa, Marx was appointed minister of justice. In that role, he moved swiftly to adopt several measures that improved conditions for some of the more vulnerable segments of the Quebec population. He was unequivocal in his public statements that conjugal violence was a criminal offence and that it would be treated as such.

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Marx's political journey came to an end in 1989 around the issue of language rights. The Quebec government used the

“notwithstanding clause” in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in order to maintain French as the only language to be used on the province’s outdoor commercial signs. The suspension of the freedom of expression provisions of the Charter of Rights made it impossible for Marx to continue as attorney general and minister of justice and he felt compelled to submit his resignation.

But Marx’s career did not end there. He was appointed to the Quebec Superior Court and over the next decade continued, as a judge, to make a key contribution to the field of justice in the province. He was also an extremely active and generous volunteer lending his energy and expertise to so many causes.

Last Monday, Herb Marx turned 88 years old. For more than six decades, Herb was fortunate to have his incredible wife, Eva, by his side. He was very proud of his two children Robert and Sarah and his four grandchildren.

For many years, I was fortunate to have Herb in my life as my mentor and close friend.

He was a great Quebecer and Canadian, and will be sorely missed by many.

*Jack Jedwab is president of the Association for Canadian Studies. He lives in Montreal.*