



COALITION QUÉBÉCOISE
POUR LE CONTRÔLE DU TABAC

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Farewell to Louis Gauvin

Montréal (Québec), December 20, 2022 — It is with deep sorrow that we announce the recent passing of Louis Gauvin on December 9th at the age of 79. Louis co-founded the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control and was a pioneer in terms of anti-tobacco advocacy.

We wish to offer our most sincere condolences to Louis' family, including his sisters, his nieces and nephews, and to his friends and colleagues in the tobacco control community – in Québec, in Canada and in the French-speaking world.

Louis was loved by everyone and considered a friend by all his colleagues. Throughout his twelve years in the public health network (from 1983 to 1995) and his thirteen years with the Coalition (from 1996 to 2009) he knew how to elicit a laugh from colleagues, friends and audiences despite the seriousness of the subject, with statements such as **“I will keep this short, but brief”**, **“I am neither for nor against, quite the contrary”**, and **“I would like to say two things. First, the second...”**. As a speaker, he was level-headed, confident, convincing, profound and funny, all at once. This is how he will be remembered by all those who had the privilege of knowing him.

A few days before his death, we went to Quebec City for one last visit - as did a few others including his long-time friend and fellow tobacco control advocate, Maurice Gingues. During our visit, Louis laughed and smiled at [the many testimonials](#) from friends and colleagues that we read to him. The words “committed”, “calm”, “unifying”, “humanist”, “devoted”, “nice”, “generous”, came up most often.

Louis's commitment to public health and related social causes goes well beyond tobacco control. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree, he went to Sainte-Hyacinthe (Quebec) in 1983, striving to promote community health and development. He co-founded the youth center *Maison des jeunes de Saint-Hyacinthe* and became involved in local youth assistance organizations. In 1990, he was involved in setting up projects for *Villes-en-Santé* (healthy cities). The following year, Louis established support groups for smokers wishing to quit, initiated school smoking prevention programs and assisted companies wanting to transition to become smokefree workplaces. He also volunteered for the local Canadian Cancer Society chapter.

Louis became aware of the importance of promoting federal and provincial legislative measures aimed at reducing tobacco use through two major events. The first occurred through his involvement in the campaign to change health warnings on cigarette packs (the tobacco industry had rendered them incomprehensible), and the second was his witnessing of the 90s cigarette smuggling crisis as orchestrated by the tobacco industry in order to pressure governments into slashing tobacco taxes.



Louis Gauvin (1943-2022)
Cofounder of the Québec Coalition for
Tobacco Control

Through these events, Louis became aware of the tobacco industry’s playbook and the need for mobilization and advocacy to counter these merchants of death on the political field. He understood that much work was required to build up the health community’s ability to effectively influence governments.

This led to the creation of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control in 1996, which Louis co-founded with Heidi Rathjen. The partnership bringing together Louis’ public speaking talent and his calm, well-thought-out and unifying approach, with Heidi’s strategic analysis capabilities and her unbounded energy, created a perfect storm within the tobacco industry’s very bastion in Quebec. As a result, it took less than two years for the National Assembly to pass the first provincial tobacco-specific legislation.

The Coalition continues to be endorsed by hundreds of organizations across the province. It has become, and remains, the heart of Quebec’s anti-tobacco movement, having been instrumental in numerous legislative victories – including smokefree workplaces, ban on tobacco advertising and sponsorship, and the removal of tobacco “power walls” in retail outlets.



Among his many other accomplishments, Louis was the founder and president of the first international French-language conference on tobacco control held in Montréal in 2002, as well as the one that followed in Paris in 2005. He also helped organize the third conference held in Niamey, Niger. Louis was the first chair on the federal minister of Health’s anti-tobacco Ministerial Advisory Committee from 2001 to 2003, which, under his tenure produced, historic reports on “light” and “mild” cigarettes and tobacco sales to minors. Louis also served as a board member for the Canadian Council for Tobacco Control.

Through his unrelenting efforts, Louis has put the province of Quebec as well as the francophone community in Canada and around the world at the forefront of the fight against tobacco, reinforcing Canada’s status as a world leader in the field.

Louis has been awarded many honours for his efforts and accomplishments. In 1998, the Canadian Cancer Society named him “National Leader on Public Interest issues”. In 1999, the World Health Organization’s Tobacco-Free Initiative awarded him, along with Heidi Rathjen, its gold medal for “exceptional contribution to public health”. He also received the International Health Association’s award (1999) and the Canadian Public Health Association’s “National Public Health Hero Award”.

Louis has left a huge and permanent mark on society here and around the world, by making a significant contribution to the life and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of Quebecers. Future generations will continue to benefit from his work and achievements.

Thank you, Louis, for everything. You will remain in our hearts forever.

Heidi Rathjen and Flory Doucas

Co-founder and Co-director of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control (1996–2022) and Co-director and spokesperson (2009–2022)

Condolences were be expressed to the family in the presence of Louis’ ashes on **Saturday, January 21, 2023, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.** at *Coopérative funéraire des Deux Rives, Centre funéraire du Plateau (693 Nérée-Tremblay Avenue, City of Québec, Québec G1N 4R8)*. A commemorative ceremony was held at 3 p.m. on that day at the funeral home. The ashes will be interred at a later date at the *Notre-Dame-de-Belmont cemetery*. Family, friends and colleagues gathered to share their experiences with Louis as well as their appreciation for this remarkable man. Here are some photos (click on them for high resolution version):



Choir (click to download video):



Everyone (or almost):



Colleagues/friends from the fight against tobacco:

