

Guy Marcil

One year after joining the force in Montreal, Guy Marcil was elected chief steward for the city's motorcycle unit in 1952. It was his first taste of labour politics and the beginning of a fascinating career that took him to the Presidency of the Montreal Brotherhood, Canadian Police Association and the Quebec Federation of Police Officers. In the early 1950's the average salary of a Montreal police officer was often 25 per cent below the average Canadian salary. It was a decade that provided little hope for catch-up and even less hope for the future. Instead of bargaining for decent wages and fair working conditions, time and time again, Marcil and the Montreal Brotherhood were forced into arbitration. In many cases the appointed arbitrator was a judge who was hardly sympathetic to the officers' plight. Little had changed by October 7, 1969. Following another disappointing arbitration decision 4,000 Montreal police officers gathered in the Paul Sauvé Arena and refused to report for work until their grievances were dealt with. With all other avenues for resolve exhausted, as the new President of the Brotherhood, Guy Marcil organized that job action. The work stoppage and its aftermath produced what 18 years of bad faith bargaining and biased arbitration awards had failed to deliver. The wage gap between police officers in Montreal and Toronto would be no more. Parity would be reached. The Montreal strike served as a watershed mark in police labour history, sending a message to government and starting a snowball effect for improved working conditions across the country. For the next eight years Guy Marcil remained at the helm of the Brotherhood never wavering in his quest for fair and just treatment of Montreal's police officers. In 1976, Guy Marcil retired from the Montreal Urban Community (MUC) Police, and as President of the Montreal Brotherhood. Fortunately, for many police officers in Quebec his retirement from association work was short lived. Soon after leaving the MUC he was appointed full-time Executive Director of the Quebec Federation of Police Officers. He soon found himself immersed in new battles, this time on a provincial basis. Soon the membership grew and through relentless work and extensive travel throughout the province, Guy Marcil played a large role in eventually transforming the Quebec Fed into an effective and responsive police association, dedicated to its membership and respected throughout the country. Guy Marcil was among the first police association leaders in Canada to endorse political activity by police associations. He worked hard to persuade others to become proactive and involved in the political decision making progress. Although many were slow to accept this approach, it is now hard to imagine any police association quietly accepting labour or justice legislation that has the potential to harm its members. For more than four decades, Guy Marcil's fervent belief in the rights of police officers has strengthened all of us.