

PETER & MARGOT AUCOIN

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**Peter Aucoin**  
**1943-2011**



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Peter Aucoin in Halifax on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 of cancer. Beloved husband of Margot (Flemming), proud father of Nicole (Olof Sandblom) of Calgary, Paul (Emily Hoegg) of Toronto and Richard of Halifax, and loving grandfather of Anna and Peter Sandblom, Calgary.

At the time of his death, Peter was Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Public Administration at Dalhousie University. Peter was a leading international scholar in his discipline, a distinguished and award-winning teacher and a valued policy advisor to government departments and agencies in Canada and abroad. In 2006, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (Academy of Social Sciences), Canada's highest award for outstanding scholarship.

In 2007, Peter was made a Member of the Order of Canada. His citation read:

*“Peter Aucoin has been a leading scholar of public management and government for over 30 years. He has produced research and writings that promote innovation and excellence in public service and governance. Known for his integrity and sound judgment, he has served in an advisory capacity at all levels of government in Canada. A mentor to countless students, he has also served with distinction in many professional organizations.”*

Peter was born in Halifax on October 3, 1943, to Kathleen (Doyle) and Charles A. Aucoin both of whom predeceased him. He attended Saint Thomas Aquinas School and Saint Mary's University High School. As a teenager, Peter was an outstanding athlete in several sports. He was one of the top junior singles and doubles junior tennis players in Nova Scotia. In 1960, he was co-captain of the Saint Mary's University High School championship high school basketball team in the top division in Halifax and Metro.

At university, Peter took his studies seriously, culminating with the award of the Gold Medal for Arts on graduation from Saint Mary's University and scholarships to study for M.A. at Dalhousie. He held a Canada Council scholarship at Queen's University where he received his Ph. D. He returned to Dalhousie in 1970 when he was appointed to the Department of Political Science, first as lecturer. By 1979, he had risen to become a full Professor of Political Science and Public Administration. Peter served as Director of the School of Public Administration from 1985 to 1990 and was Chair of the Department of Political Science from 1992 to 1995. In 1993, he was honoured with an appointment as McCulloch Professor in Political Science. In 2003, he was appointed the Eric Dennis Memorial Professor of Government and Political Science, a title he held with much pride until his retirement from Dalhousie in 2009. In May, 2011, his *alma mater*, Saint Mary's University, conferred the degree of Doctor of Civil Law (*honoris causa*) on Peter, an honour he was very proud to have received.

On secondment from Dalhousie, Peter held several postings with government bodies, too numerous to list. He was most proud of the work he did as Research Coordinator for the federal Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (1985-6) and as the Research Director for the federal Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (1989-91). The research conducted and published under his direction for the latter commission constituted then, and still remains, the most comprehensive examinations of electoral law and campaign finance undertaken anywhere. Following his time on this Commission, Peter appeared as the lead expert witness for a number of Charter challenges to federal and provincial election finance statutes. His opinions and evidence were cited frequently in Supreme Court of Canada decisions in these cases.

As a public administration scholar, Peter was at home in public service circles as he was in his university setting. He was a Senior Fellow of the Canada School of Public Service for the Government of Canada. He was frequently asked to be an advisor and consultant by many federal and provincial government agencies, including the federal Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Auditor General and the Public Service Commission. His comparative research took him many times to Australia, Britain and New Zealand. In Australia and New Zealand, he presented his research frequently to university seminars, professional public administration conferences and officials in government departments. In 2002, Peter was a member of the British Cabinet Office's committee to review its management reform program. For six years, he was academic coordinator of a Dalhousie program, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, to design and help develop graduate studies in public administration in Cuba.

Peter held professional leadership positions, nationally and internationally, and served for many years on the executive boards of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada and the Canadian Political Science Association. He was president of the latter organization in 1995-6. He served on the editorial boards of several leading Canadian and international public administration journals. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Research on Public Policy in Montreal, Canada's pre-eminent independent think-tank, and was chair of its research committee from 2006 to 2010. Peter's contribution to public administration was recognized by the Institute of Public Administration (IPAC) when he was the 1999 recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's Medal for Excellence in Public Administration, given by IPAC-Nova Scotia. In 2005, he was the recipient of the prestigious national Governor General Vanier Medal for Exceptional Achievement in Public Administration.

Peter authored and edited 15 books and wrote more than 80 journal articles and book chapters on Canadian government and Canadian and comparative public administration. His publications received national and international prizes and are still widely cited internationally in both scholarly journals and government reports. His 1995 book on public management reform in Canada in a comparative perspective received an international award as the best book in comparative public policy and administration by *Governance*, the leading international journal in his field. For the past two decades, Peter's research was continuously funded by a series of grants

from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Peter's contributions to scholarship were recognized by his 2006 election as a Fellow of the Royal Society and by his Canadian and foreign colleagues in 2009 at an international conference at Dalhousie which produced a *festschrift* in his honour.

In both Political Science and Public Administration, Peter taught and mentored hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom have entered the professions of law and public service in Canada and abroad. Scores of his former students became colleagues and friends. Peter's commitment to, and his success as a teacher and mentor, were recognised by Dalhousie when he was selected as the 2006 recipient of the university-wide Alumni Association Award for Teaching Excellence.

As a parent, Peter was a Beaver, Cub and Scout leader as well as a T-Ball and soccer coach. He was active in his local church and at various times served on the boards of the Roman Catholic Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Religious Education Commission, the Social Justice Commission and the Permanent Diaconate Committee, as well as the Saint Thomas Aquinas parish council.

He was predeceased by his parents. He is survived by his wife, Margot Anne (Flemming) of Halifax; daughter Nicole (Olof) Sandblom of Calgary; sons Paul (Emily Hoegg) of Toronto and Richard, Halifax; grandchildren Anna and Peter Sandblom of Calgary; sisters Nancy (Edward) Lingley of Dartmouth; Judith (Richard) Salinetti of Lee, Massachusetts; Johanna (Michael Slaunwhite) of Halifax; brother James (Sally) of New Glasgow; brother-in-law Brian (Janice) Flemming of Halifax; sisters-in-law Jeanne Flemming (Norman Kyle) of Ottawa and Corinne (Bruce) Murray of Oakville; and many wonderful nieces and nephews.

*Written by Peter Aucoin*