

Harvie Andre, feisty Mulroney cabinet minister, dies at 72

[Dawn Walton](#) and [Sandra Martin](#)

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Harvie Andre, a feisty former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister during the Mulroney era, has died.

Mr. Andre, who served almost 21 years in the House of Commons, lost his fight with cancer on Sunday, according to his family. He was 72.

Born in Edmonton on July 27, 1940, Mr. Andre was a chemical engineer and a professor before he turned to politics. He was first elected federally in 1972 to represent Calgary Centre. He would be re-elected five more times before retiring from public service in 1993.

Among his more high-profile posts, Mr. Andre was Tory House Leader, Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, Minister of State for Science and Associate Minister of Defence.

In a 2006 article in the University of Alberta engineering magazine, Mr. Andre was lauded as “one of Brian Mulroney’s most reliable troubleshooters, a real go-to guy in the Progressive Conservative cabinet.”

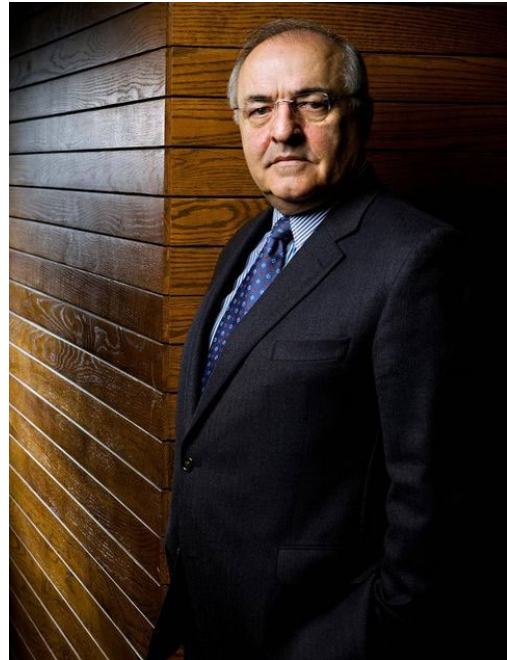
Mr. Mulroney and his wife, Mila, expressed their condolences to Mr. Andre's wife, Joan, and his family.

“Harvie Andre was a force of nature,” he wrote in a statement. “Principled, strong, determined and successful. That is a summary of Harvie's life and the tremendous contribution he made to the Government of Canada for almost a decade, and to Canada throughout a life of commitment and achievement.”

“I admired Harvie greatly and deeply appreciated his wise counsel and his effective service,” Mr. Mulroney continued. “He will be greatly missed by all who were privileged to know him and call him a friend.”

Federal interim Liberal leader Bob Rae stood in the House Monday to remember Mr. Andre’s contribution to public life.

“I knew him as a committed Conservative, a feisty debater and an extraordinarily hard-working Member of Parliament and minister,” he said.



Former MP and Cabinet Minister Harvie Andre in 2008 Chris Bolin/Globe & Mail

“Harvie had a deep passion for his province and country, but his first dedication was always to family. He will be truly missed by us all,” the family said in a statement.

On Twitter Monday, as news of Mr. Andre’s death spread, journalists who covered his career, and others, were quick to restate his most famous quote: “I’ve never understood why it’s so much more profitable to *know* Harvie Andre than to *be* Harvie Andre”

Alberta Energy Minister, Ken Hughes, was among those who used social media to share his thoughts.

“Harvie Andre served Canada with unequalled dedication, commitment, intensity and passion,” he wrote. “A dear friend, mentor and colleague.”

Mr. Andre returned to private life to take on roles including president and chief executive officer of Wenzel Downhole Tools Ltd., an oil and gas drilling equipment manufacturer as well as chairman of Bow Energy Resources Corp., an oil exploration company.

Ron Patterson, Wenzel’s CEO and president, said the news of Mr. Andre’s passing comes as a shock. While he had been diagnosed with an undisclosed form of cancer last fall, he still continued to work at the company as a member of its board of directors.

“He was a tough guy,” Mr. Patterson said, “even through chemo and radiation therapy, he was still coming in from time to time.”

In fact, at last August's board meeting, Mr. Patterson thought Mr. Andre had the disease beaten. Mr. Andre had been with the company for the past 17 years, and steered it through troubled times in the industry, Mr. Patterson added.

“I don't think Wenzel would be where it is now if it wasn't for Harvie's leadership” he said.

Mr. Andre leaves behind his wife Joan, three children, Coryn, Lauren and Peter, and four grandchildren.