



IMAGE OF THESUBURBAN.COM BANNER WITH THE LINK [HTTPS://WWW.THESUBURBAN.COM/NEWS/WEST_ISLAND_NEWS/DDO-RESIDENT-92-CAPS-CAREER-AS-ADVOCATE-FOR-VISUALLY-IMPAIRED/ARTICLE_7B99D04B-948E-5ED5-A17A-B0E3087BA2C8.HTML](https://www.thesuburban.com/news/west_island_news/ddo-resident-92-caps-career-as-advocate-for-visually-impaired/article_7B99D04B-948E-5ED5-A17A-B0E3087BA2C8.HTML)

West Island News | thesuburban.com
Featured:DDO resident, 92, caps career as advocate

May 31, 2023



LAMBERT HOLDING HER LETTER FROM LAC-SAINT-LOUIS MP FRANCIS SCARPALEGGIA.

DDO resident, 92, caps career as advocate for visually impaired

By DAN LAXER

Dollard-des-Ormeaux resident Irene Lambert is an award-winning advocate for those living with visual impairment. After 35 years on the Board of Directors of Pointe-Claire's *Low Vision Self-Help Association*, and at the age of 92, Lambert is stepping down.

Lambert was raised in Lachine. Since the age of 10, she has been living with Retinitis Pigmentosa, or RP, in which the cells of the retina break down over time, causing

vision loss. She turned her disability into her passion, working to make the lives of those living with visual impairment better. She worked alongside her late husband, Bob, who was the first blind professor at what was once Loyola College. They spent some time in the U.S., but made their way back to Montreal in 1969, when the PQ was in its infancy, the October Crisis was brewing, and the merger of Loyola College and Sir George Williams University was just a few years away.

At the time, there was no real support for people living with visual impairment. Guide dogs were not welcome anywhere. But eventually the Quebec government set up a commission that Lambert and her then-husband were part of, and in 1978 an accessibility law was passed to improve the lives of the disabled.

Later, she joined Ruth Williams, founder of the Low Vision Self-Help Association, becoming her right hand, eventually taking over as president, a position she held twice. She is amused by all the publicity she's been getting over the past couple of years. "I never wanted recognition," she told *The Suburban*. "That's not why I do what I do."

Still, two years ago she was awarded the Chris Stark Distinguished Advocacy Award. And after 35 years with the association, they are as reluctant to let her go as she is to leave. "I'm still a member," she says. "It's still my passion."

As for what she'll do now that she's stepping away from official duties, she plans to write the history of the association. "I'm one of those ridiculous people," she says, "who always has more to do than I have time to do it." But she remains, at nearly 93, an indefatigable advocate. "Advocacy," she says, "was really the greatest consumer of my time."

Lambert is now very happily married to her third husband, Peter, with whom she's made a life in DDO. She is indeed proud of the work she has done, and of the accolades she had earned, including a tribute paid to her in the House of Commons by Lac-Saint-Louis MP Francis Scarpaleggia.

But she says there is still work to be done to further improve the lives of the visually impaired. "Even today," she says, "perceptions of blind people are pathetic. We're still fighting for acceptability and accessibility."

She would like to see the association, and the work they continue to do, get the publicity they deserve. "You're writing a story about Low Vision," she says, referring to the association. "Not about me."