

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JACK LAYTON

Introduction

Focus

This *News in Review* story focuses on the death of Jack Layton, its impact on Canadians, and what it means for the future of his party and the country. The Guide also explores the author's relationship with Jack Layton and Olivia Chow.

Canadians were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of federal New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton in the early hours of August 22, 2011. Layton had been battling cancer for some time and had announced that he was temporarily stepping down as party leader at the end of July.

But few expected that the end would come so quickly for him.

During the federal election campaign of 2011, Layton galvanized his party and attracted unprecedented support from voters across the country—especially in Quebec, where the NDP swept the province. He appeared full of life and enthusiasm as he waved to enthusiastic crowds of supporters. But only a few months later, Layton announced he would be stepping down as leader to battle a new bout of cancer.

Always known as an optimist and a fighter, Layton vowed that he would beat the cancer and resume his post as NDP leader when Parliament opened in the fall of 2011. But it was not to be. Both his party, and many Canadians who may not have voted for him, mourned his loss in a spontaneous demonstration of grief and admiration.

In the days following his death, Layton's body lay in state in the House of Commons in Ottawa and in Toronto's City Hall, where he had once served as a city councillor. Thousands

of people, most of whom never knew Layton personally, lined up for hours to pay their respects. Outside City Hall, many left personal tributes to “Jack,” written on the walls and pavements in chalk. Layton's state funeral—held in Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall on August 27—attracted dignitaries and political leaders of all stripes, along with many others who had queued overnight to gain admission. Prime Minister Stephen Harper authorized the holding of a state funeral—the first for a federal opposition leader since Sir Wilfrid Laurier's funeral in 1919.

The public outpouring of grief over Layton's death was unlike anything that had occurred in Canada in recent years. The only parallel to it was the death of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau in 2000. But unlike Trudeau, Layton was still actively involved in politics—and indeed appeared poised on the brink of a historic breakthrough for his party following his remarkable success at the polls on May 2. Now that he was gone, the NDP faced the daunting task of selecting a new leader who would be able to build on his considerable achievements and establish the party's credibility to Canadians as an alternative “government-in-waiting” to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives.

To Consider

1. a) Do you remember when you heard about the death of federal NDP leader Jack Layton? Was it on the news? Or were family members talking about it?
b) What was your reaction to the news?
2. Why do you think so many Canadians were touched by this event, whether or not they were NDP supporters?
3. What challenges might the NDP face in selecting a new leader to replace Jack Layton?

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Video Review

Pre-viewing Questions

With a partner or in a small group discuss and respond to the following questions.

1. How much do you know about federal NDP leader Jack Layton, who passed away on August 22, 2011?

2. Why do you think there was such an outpouring of grief and admiration for this political leader in the week after his death?

3. What political breakthrough had Jack Layton been able to achieve for the NDP just months before his death?

Viewing Questions

As you watch the video, respond to the questions in the spaces provided.

1. Why did Jack Layton and the NDP have a lot to celebrate on the night of May 2, 2011?

2. What shadow had been hanging over Jack Layton since early 2010?

3. Why were people shocked by Layton's appearance at a press conference in late July 2011?

4. What announcement did Layton make at the press conference?

5. Who took over from Layton as the interim leader of the NDP?

6. Besides prostate cancer, what other health problem had Layton been facing?

7. What political figures paid tribute to Layton following his death on August 22, 2011?

8. Where did Layton's body lie in state before his funeral?

9. How did many young people pay their tributes to Layton outside Toronto City Hall?

10. Why was Layton's state funeral a celebration as well as a sad occasion?

11. What important event for the NDP and Canadian politics will occur on March 24, 2012?

Post-viewing Questions

1. Now that you have watched the video, revisit your responses to the Pre-viewing Questions.

a) How has watching the video helped you to respond to the questions in greater depth?

b) Did you have to add or change any information?

2. Why do you think Layton was able to make such a major breakthrough for the NDP in the election of May 2, 2011?

3. Do you think it will be difficult for the NDP to find a new leader who can fill the shoes of Jack Layton? Why/why not?

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JACK LAYTON

Jack Layton: A Personal Tribute

As a member of the writing team for *CBC News in Review* I am used to covering stories on a variety of topics from the third person—or as an outside observer. But this story is unique for me as a writer, because Jack Layton happened to be a friend of mine. Because of this fact, portions of this guide—including this section—are written in the first person.

A Difficult Time

At 5:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 27, 2011, I joined a fast-growing line outside Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall. Many hundreds of people were already standing ahead of me in that chilly pre-dawn hour, and we were all there for one reason: to gain admission to the state funeral of Jack Layton. I do not usually choose to stand in line, but this was a special occasion for me, because I had known Jack and his wife, Olivia Chow, for many years as a neighbour, friend, and political supporter. Although I was aware that he was very ill with cancer, his death came as a shock to me. And I felt I had to be there in person to say my own farewell to this outstanding political leader who had also once been my friend.

The Beginnings of a Friendship

My acquaintance with Jack and Olivia began in the mid-1980s when we were neighbours in the Hazelburn Co-op in downtown Toronto. Jack was a city councillor, and Olivia a school trustee. Like me, Jack was sharing custody of his two children with his ex-wife, and his children were almost exactly the same age as my own. We soon became friends, as did our kids.

Jack and I participated in a number of voluntary co-op activities, such as

a weekly collection of old newspapers from each floor for recycling. These activities were sometimes followed by a beer at my place once the job was done. When I suffered a serious bicycle accident in the summer of 1987, leaving me with casts on both arms, Jack, Olivia, and Olivia's mother were a tremendous help to me and demonstrated a real spirit of caring that I will always remember fondly. The home-cooked Chinese dinners Olivia's mother prepared—and which we all shared—were a high point in my day at the time.

I was delighted to attend Jack and Olivia's wedding the following summer, and I have rarely seen two people who appeared to be so completely “in sync” with each other, both personally and politically. With Jack and Olivia, it was sometimes hard to tell where one left off and the other began, such was their total commitment to public life and their incredible dedication to it, and to each other.

Moving Out of the Co-op

By the early 90s, I had moved from the co-op, as had Jack and Olivia. Their move had followed a particularly nasty scandal arising from allegations that they had not been paying their share of the monthly co-op occupancy cost. I knew that they had indeed been paying a supplemental fee levied on higher-income residents such as myself, and I was angry to see how media and political forces hostile to Jack and Olivia could manipulate the facts so brazenly.

My contacts with them became fewer at that time, and were mainly confined to political events such as the annual lunar New Year dinners they hosted in a downtown Chinese restaurant.

There Jack displayed his remarkable talents as an auctioneer, raffling off a number of items to raise funds for the NDP during the lengthy intermissions between the many courses of the meal. On one of these evenings, in the final months of Bob Rae's ill-fated NDP provincial government, I recall mentioning to Jack in a private conversation that maybe it was time to think about forming a "new" NDP. I could not have realized then that only a few years later he would almost single-handedly rejuvenate the party and eventually lead it to heights that were inconceivable at that very low point in its fortunes.

An Incredible Personality

Jack was the kind of person who almost always appeared upbeat, confident, and sure of himself and his beliefs. To some, his manner appeared to border on cockiness, or even arrogance, and it grated. I did not regard him that way, but I always knew that he was first and foremost a "political animal" in every sense of that term, and that there was indeed an element of calculation in the things he did and sometimes in his relationships with others. But over the years, I also noticed a distinct mellowing in Jack, and a willingness to admit that he sometimes made mistakes. This was clearly demonstrated during what was to be his last election campaign in 2011, when the CBC's Peter Mansbridge asked him to identify his single biggest political regret. Jack did not hesitate to admit that he still felt badly about an unfortunate remark he had made in the heat of the moment in the 2004 election, when he accused then Liberal prime minister Paul Martin of being personally responsible for the plight of homeless people.

I became reconnected with Jack and Olivia on a political basis during the 2004 campaign, when I was nominated

to contest what was clearly a "no-win" suburban Toronto riding for the NDP. Despite the fact that I knew from the outset that I stood no chance of being elected, the experience was a high point in my life. Like other Toronto-area candidates, I had the opportunity to pose for a picture with Jack for my campaign literature. On that occasion he displayed his usual irrepressible optimism, asking me, "Have you given any thought to what you might do if you won?" To this I replied, "Jack, if I won you would be prime minister of Canada. Have you given any thought to that?" We shared a knowing laugh together, and it was clear to me that he was able to distinguish between wishful thinking and hard political reality. And of course neither of us knew that just a few elections later he would come close to living that reality.

The Funeral

Jack's funeral was an incredibly moving experience for me and the thousands of others who were in attendance. Watching Olivia and the other members of Jack's family follow his flag-draped casket into the hall was almost too much to bear. The music was inspiring, as were the eulogies and tributes, and I was not surprised to learn that Jack had played a key role in orchestrating the whole event. But I suppose the most touching moment in the entire ceremony for me occurred during Stephen Lewis's remarkably eloquent address, in which he urged those in attendance to remember Jack's political commitment to the cause of social democracy and equality for all Canadians.

At the end of his speech, Lewis quoted the Indian author and political activist Arundathi Roy, who once wrote that "a new world is not only possible, she is already on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing." On

Election Day 2004, I had e-mailed that very same quote to Jack as a morale-booster and as my way of thanking him for the opportunity to have stood with him and the NDP during the campaign, whatever its outcome might be. Despite the unbelievable pressures he must have been under as a federal party leader on the last day of an election, he found the time to reply to me personally a few hours later, letting me know he appreciated receiving my message and how much the quote meant to him.

Like Jack, I too like to think that maybe a “new world” of greater social and economic justice and inclusiveness for all might be possible, if not “already on its way.” And I hope that

the example of this fine man’s life and dedication to these causes may inspire the next generation to continue to work for them in the years to come. As Jack himself said at the end of his remarkable letter to Canadians, written shortly before he died, “love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful, and optimistic. And we’ll change the world” (“Jack Layton’s last letter to Canadians,” CBC News, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/08/22/pol-layton-last-letter.html).

Jack, it was an honour to have known you. Goodbye, my friend. I will never forget you and what you stood for.

Follow-up

1. Reflect on the information you read in this feature. The writer provides information about Jack Layton’s personality and who he was as a person, not just who he was as a politician. Does this personal information enhance your knowledge and appreciation of Layton as a political figure? Or does the personality of politicians not matter so much?
2. From reading this section, what qualities do you think Jack Layton possessed that inspired so many Canadians, including the writer?
3. a) Why do you think so many young Canadians responded to Jack Layton’s death with such admiration and respect?

b) Do you think it will influence their political attitudes and behaviour in the future? Why or why not?

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JACK LAYTON

The Man and His Life

Focus for Reading

Jack Layton's life was full of political commitment to various causes from his early days as a university activist in Montreal in the 1960s until his death as the Leader of the Official Opposition in 2011. In your notebook, create an organizer like the one below. As you read the summary of some of the main events in the political and personal life of Jack Layton, record key points in your organizer. You should be able to enter at least four or five points in each section of your chart. You will be using this information in the activities that follow the text material.

Growing up in Quebec

- Jack Layton grew up in a predominantly English-speaking suburb of Montreal
- his father and grandfather were both involved in politics
- he studied political science under Charles Taylor at Montreal's McGill University

A Career in Municipal Politics

Rise to NDP Leadership

Growing up in Quebec

Jack Layton was born in Montreal on July 18, 1950. He grew up in the predominantly English-speaking suburb of Hudson. He came from a family steeped in politics over many generations. His father, Robert, served as a cabinet minister in Brian Mulroney's Conservative government during the 1980s, while his grandfather, Gilbert, was a member of Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis's Union Nationale administration in the 1930s. Jack carried on his family's political tradition in high school, where he was elected student council president.

His first foray into political activism was his unsuccessful attempt to persuade the local town council to build a youth centre in Hudson. But from this experience he learned valuable lessons about grassroots political mobilization to promote causes that were important to him.

Layton studied political science at Montreal's prestigious McGill

University, where he fell under the influence of Charles Taylor, an internationally renowned political theorist and one-time NDP candidate who ran unsuccessfully against Pierre Trudeau. Although McGill was an English-speaking university at the time, Layton and other radical students led a movement to promote the use of French on campus.

It was the era of the "Quiet Revolution" in Quebec, and Layton sympathized with the demands of Québécois for greater language rights, if not separation from Canada. In October 1970 the government of Pierre Trudeau imposed the War Measures Act in response to the violent activities of the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). This was a watershed moment for Layton. Federal NDP leader T.C. "Tommy" Douglas led a spirited opposition to this measure, which he believed to be a heavy-handed overreaction that trampled on Canadians' democratic

rights. Although most Canadians supported the government's actions at the time, Layton was not one of them, and he joined the NDP as a gesture of admiration for Douglas's stance on this issue.

A Career in Municipal Politics

After graduating from McGill, Layton and his wife, Sally, moved to Toronto, where Layton pursued a master's degree in political science at York University. In 1974, he became a professor at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in downtown Toronto and began his involvement in local politics. Layton was interested in issues such as affordable housing, urban poverty, the environment, and public transit. He soon found a forum to pursue his pet causes at the municipal level of government.

Encouraged by former Toronto mayors David Crombie and John Sewell, in 1982 Layton ran for a seat on city council against Gordon Chong, a popular incumbent in a predominantly Chinese-speaking part of the city. To the surprise of most observers, Layton won. At this time, the Laytons had two children, Sarah, born in 1977, and Mike, born in 1980. Both of them would later follow their father's footsteps into politics, with Sarah working for the Stephen Lewis Foundation—which focuses on the issue of AIDS in Africa—and Mike winning his father's old seat on Toronto City Council in 2010.

At City Hall, Layton quickly became a leading member of a left-leaning bloc of local councillors. He never shied away from taking radical and sometimes unpopular positions on issues such as the building of SkyDome—now the Rogers Centre—which he opposed. He argued for the need for greater municipal action to combat the spreading AIDS epidemic

of the 1980s. In 1984 he was arrested at the Eaton Centre while handing out leaflets in support of striking workers there, but the charges were later dismissed.

In 1988, Jack and Sally Layton divorced, and he married Toronto school trustee Olivia Chow, who would later become a city councillor and federal member of Parliament. Chow introduced Layton to the city's influential Chinese community, and he eventually learned to speak passable Mandarin and Cantonese. Because of their strong commitment to local issues, and their ability to attract media attention, the couple became the "poster children" of the downtown Toronto left-wing community.

In 1991, Layton ran for the position of mayor of Toronto. By this time he was widely recognized as the leader of the left-wing bloc on City Council, and his chances of winning initially appeared good. But his opposition to the city's bid to host the 1996 Olympic Games, along with the decline in support for the provincial NDP government of Bob Rae, hurt his popularity. When two of his right-wing opponents dropped out of the race, throwing their support behind councillor June Rowlands—his main rival—Layton's bid for mayor hit an insurmountable roadblock, and he suffered his first electoral defeat.

A second followed in the federal election of 1993, when he ran unsuccessfully for the NDP in the Toronto riding of Rosedale. But he was able to win re-election to city council in 1994 and resumed his involvement in local issues, this time with a special focus on the environment. Layton became a fixture on streets in the city's downtown core, where he and Chow were frequently spotted riding their bicycles along specially designated

Did you know . . .

Jack Layton was given the nickname “the energizer bunny” because of his enthusiasm and frequent personal appearances throughout the spring 2011 federal election campaign.

bike lanes that he had pressured the council to create.

Rise to NDP Leadership

Layton ran again for federal office in the election of 1997 but lost to Liberal Dennis Mills in the riding of Danforth. But his profile as a municipal politician continued to grow when he became the president of the Canadian Federation of Municipalities in 2000 and earned the respect of mayors across the country for his informed approach to local issues and his ability to build consensus among officials of different political stripes.

In 2003, he made the bold decision to contest the federal NDP leadership following the resignation of Alexa McDonough. At this time, the party was at a low point in support across Canada, and Layton did not even have a seat in Parliament, having failed twice to win one. The NDP was looking for a new leader that could bring much-needed energy to the party, especially among young voters who had become disenchanted with it. Layton took on the task with his usual enthusiasm and confidence and won the race. In 2004, he led the NDP in the first of four federal election campaigns he was to contest, winning a modest 19 seats. But he was able to improve these results in subsequent elections, winning 26 seats in 2006 and 37 in 2008.

The years of Jack Layton’s leadership of the federal NDP were marked by a succession of minority governments, led first by Paul Martin’s Liberals and then by Stephen Harper’s Conservatives. As the head of the fourth party in Parliament, behind the Bloc Québécois, Layton learned to use his influence to pressure the government to introduce policies favourable to the NDP, which he believed would also benefit Canadians. For example, in 2005, he supported

Paul Martin’s beleaguered Liberal minority government in return for a commitment to more money on social programs.

After the 2008 election, Layton negotiated a possible three-party coalition with Liberal leader Stephan Dion and Bloc Québécois chief Gilles Duceppe to drive Stephen Harper’s Conservatives from power, a move that did not succeed. However he never hesitated to place his political principles ahead of popularity, as when he publicly called for negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan in order to end the bloodshed there. This position earned him ridicule at the time, but was later adopted by coalition forces.

In 2010, Layton was diagnosed with prostate cancer, the same disease his father had battled and eventually succumbed to years before. With his usual determination, he announced that he would fight the disease and continue to lead the NDP as the party faced yet another federal election campaign in the spring of 2011. Weakened by the effects of a hip operation, Layton used a walking cane throughout the campaign. His performance in the leaders’ debate won praise across the country, but especially in Quebec, where voters were becoming disenchanted with the pro-sovereigntist Bloc Québécois and more receptive to the NDP and its popular leader, “le bon Jack.”

As the party surged in the polls in the final days of the campaign, some pundits even speculated on an NDP minority government. On election night, Jack Layton and the NDP won a record 103 seats, 59 of them in Quebec, replacing the Liberals as the Official Opposition to Stephen Harper’s now-majority Conservative government. It was truly a remarkable victory for a party that had previously been a

perennial also-ran in federal election races, failing even to come close to second place. Layton had succeeded where even renowned former NDP leaders such as Tommy Douglas, David Lewis, and Ed Broadbent had not.

But his resounding success at the polls, which opened up political opportunities the NDP had previously only dreamed of, was to be Jack Layton's last hurrah. After a short parliamentary session in the late spring, Layton disappeared from the public arena until July 26, when he called a press conference to announce that he was temporarily stepping down as leader for health reasons. Reporters on the scene and viewers who later saw him on television were shocked by his gaunt, frail appearance and weak,

reed-like voice. Nycole Turmel—a rookie MP and former union leader from Quebec—replaced him as interim leader. Although he promised his party and Canadians that he would be back on the job in the fall when Parliament resumed, his returning cancer had other plans for him. Surrounded by wife Olivia, children Sarah and Mike, and granddaughter Beatrice, Jack Layton peacefully passed away in his downtown Toronto home in the early hours of Monday, August 22, 2011.

Source: "Jack Layton: A timeline of his accomplishments," CBC News, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/08/22/f-jack-layton-timeline.html; "Obituary: Jack Layton's legacy as a fighter," CBC News, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/08/22/pol-layton-death.html

Follow-up

1. Compare the information in your summary chart with that of a classmate. Help each other to complete any missing information.
2. What factors in Jack Layton's early life do you think were influential in shaping him as a politician?
3. How successful was Jack Layton as leader of the federal NDP? Could it be said that Layton died just at the moment of his greatest political achievement?

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JACK LAYTON

What Next for the NDP and Canadian Politics?

Focus for Reading

Each section below begins with a question. As you read, record your responses to each question.

The untimely death of NDP leader Jack Layton at the height of his political success has left a gaping void in the federal political scene. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives are now a majority government, and the once-mighty Liberals have been reduced to third-party status under their interim leader, Bob Rae. The NDP is the Official Opposition, but now finds itself under the direction of an interim leader, rookie Quebec MP Nycole Turmel—whose first days on the job appeared shaky and uncertain after it was revealed that she had once been a member of the pro-sovereigntist Bloc Québécois. It will be a real challenge for the party to fill the huge shoes Jack Layton has left behind.

Here are three questions arising from Layton's death and its impact on Canadian politics in the years to come:

1. Who will be the next NDP leader?

In Jack Layton's farewell letter to Canadians, written shortly before his death, he recommended that the party unite behind interim leader Nycole Turmel and that a leadership convention be held as soon as possible in 2012. As of September 2011, plans were already in the works to convene such a meeting in Toronto in March 2012. Media speculation about potential leadership candidates was quick to develop in the weeks following Layton's death, but as of late September 2011, only two people had officially announced their candidacies. They were Brian Topp, the former president of the party and an influential back-room organizer; and newly elected Quebec MP Romeo

Saganash, an aboriginal activist from the northern part of that province.

However, others were soon expected to throw their hats into the ring, including NDP deputy leader and Quebec MP Thomas Mulcair, who had orchestrated the party's stunning breakthrough in that province; Nova Scotia MP and former provincial NDP leader Robert Chisholm; Toronto-area MP Peggy Nash; Ottawa MP Paul Dewar; and BC MPs Libby Davis, Peter Julian, and Nathan Cullen. In addition, other names that were being suggested included former Manitoba premier and now Canadian Ambassador to the United States Gary Doer, and even interim Liberal leader Bob Rae. Jack Layton's widow, Olivia Chow, who holds a Toronto seat in Parliament, was quick to dismiss any speculation that she might seek her late husband's position.

At this early point in the race, it was difficult to envision which of these potential candidates might emerge victorious. All of them were regarded as possessing considerable strengths but also major weaknesses.

For their part, NDP officials had imposed strict regulations on how the leadership race was to be conducted. Each candidate would have to pay a \$15 000 nomination fee to the party, and his or her campaign expenses would be capped at \$500 000. Any candidate who held a position within the NDP federal caucus that might give him or her undue media attention, such as Mulcair's role as deputy party leader, would have to step down from that post for the duration of the campaign.

2. Is a Liberal-NDP merger likely?

Some Canadians who oppose the right-wing direction of the current Stephen Harper government believe it would be logical for the forces of the centre-left in the country—the Liberals and the NDP—to unite to form a single party. Another alternative might be some kind of electoral alliance, whereby the parties would remain separate, but agree not to run candidates against each other in order to ensure the defeat of Conservative MPs in the next election. Shortly after the 2011 vote, there were some in both parties calling for such a move.

But Bob Rae, himself a former NDP Ontario premier, and now the interim leader of the federal Liberal Party, rejected such proposals. And influential NDPers like former leader Ed Broadbent indicated that given the party's new powerful role as the Official Opposition, it was unlikely that any new NDP leader would be looking to the Liberals for assistance any time soon.

But the idea of a merger does have its merits to those who believe it may be the only way the Harper government can be defeated the next time Canadians go to the polls. They point to the fact that the Conservatives were able to gain a majority of seats because of vote-splitting in many Ontario ridings. Vote splitting occurs when the Liberals and NDP together polled far more votes than the winning Conservative candidate did. If the two parties had formed some kind of alliance before the election, Stephen Harper would no longer be Prime Minister and a Liberal-NDP coalition would find itself in power.

The successful merger of the former Canadian Alliance-Reform Party and the Progressive Conservatives in the early 2000s was able to bring an end to what appeared to be an almost perpetual cycle of Liberal federal governments. So

the argument goes, if the forces of the right can unite, then why not those of the left? This would result in basically a two-party system for Canada, similar to that of the United States, where the Democrats occupy the centre-left of the political spectrum and the Republicans the right.

3. How effective will the NDP be as the Official Opposition?

For the first time in its history, the NDP finds itself in the role of Official Opposition. It has 103 MPs, many of them young people from Quebec elected for the first time. In order for the party to be successful in establishing its credibility in the minds of Canadians the NDP will have to prove to a sometimes skeptical public and media establishment that it is a responsible political force capable of dealing with the difficult issues that now confront Canada.

For example, there are some in the business community who doubt the NDP's ability to be a good manager of the nation's fiscal and monetary systems. They regard the NDP as a "tax-and-spend" party that does not recognize the need to curb government spending in order to reduce a ballooning federal deficit. Others point to the fact that the NDP has a close alliance with labour unions and therefore may be reluctant when in office to introduce measures that might curb union power and bargaining rights. And there are also some who doubt the party's commitment to a foreign policy alliance with the United States, especially after Jack Layton's call to withdraw Canadian forces from Afghanistan.

But NDP supporters believe that it is possible for the party to grow and mature over the next few years in preparation for a showdown with the governing Conservatives. They argue that most NDP provincial governments,

such as those that have held power in Saskatchewan or Manitoba, were actually among the first to eliminate their deficits, and showed a great deal of fiscal responsibility where public spending was concerned. To counter the impression that it is the party of organized labour, the NDP has reduced the influence of trade unions in the process of choosing its next leader in 2012. And finally, the policy of withdrawing from Afghanistan, which the NDP was the first to advocate, has in fact been adopted by the Conservatives in response to growing opposition to that war among Canadians.

The NDP's main challenge now is to select a leader who will be able to build on the great breakthrough that

Jack Layton was able to bring about, especially in Quebec. It now has four years to consolidate its position in that province and to broaden its base of support in other parts of Canada, especially Ontario and the West, where it only made minor gains, if any, in the 2011 race. The first public opinion polls taken in the weeks following Jack Layton's death showed a spike in the party's national popularity, placing it very close to the Conservatives and far ahead of the Liberals. But whether what pollsters have called the "Jack effect" will last very long remains to be seen. And the next federal election is still four years away.

Analysis


1. With a partner, share your responses to the three questions posed in this section. Help each other to complete any missing information or answers that you think are important.
2. What qualities do you think the NDP should be looking for as it prepares to select its new federal leader? Why would these be important for the party and Canadian voters as a whole?
3. What are the arguments in favour of and against the idea of a Liberal-NDP merger or electoral alliance? Would you support or oppose such a move? Why?
4. What are the main challenges the NDP now faces as it assumes the role of the Official Opposition to the Conservative government of Stephen Harper? Do you think it will succeed in establishing itself as a credible government-in-waiting in time for the next federal election in 2015? Why or why not?

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JACK LAYTON

Activity: Assessing His Impact

The life and death of federal NDP leader Jack Layton may be viewed as an event of historical significance for Canada. It certainly generated a great deal of response from Canadians across the country, whether or not they were NDP supporters. It is perhaps too early to tell exactly what the impact of Layton's life and death will have for the future of Canadian politics, but most observers believe it will be significant.

Your task is to assess the impact of Jack Layton's life and death, using the criteria for determining historical significance as outlined in the Historical Significance information page at the CBC *News in Review* website, http://newsinreview.cbclearning.ca/worksheets/historical_significance/. For additional information on understanding historical significance, visit the website of The Historical Thinking Project at www.historicalthinking.ca.

 After you have read the information and understand the criteria of historical significance—whether or not an individual's life results in change, and whether or not it reveals something that is relevant for us today—complete the worksheet on historical significance at <http://newsinreview.cbclearning.ca/wp-content/uploads/worksheets/nir-histor-signif.pdf>, focusing on important events in the life of Jack Layton as outlined in this *News in Review* story.

When you have completed the worksheet, share your responses with a partner or in a small group. Then hold a full-class discussion of the historical significance of the life and death of Jack Layton. In your discussion you may want to consider some other aspects of significance:

- Distance from the event
- Will Jack Layton's life seem more or less significant 20, 30, or even 50 years from now?
- The role of gender and ethnicity
- Does there seem to be a difference between the way women see Jack Layton and his legacy, and the way men do? If so, why might this be?
- Do people from certain ethnic backgrounds feel more strongly about Jack Layton and his historical significance than others? If so, why might this be?