

National Significance and Jack Layton

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Part A

Jack Layton, also called John Gilbert Layton, was born on July 18th, 1950 in Montreal, Quebec, and spent his childhood in Hudson, Quebec. Layton's early political action was influenced by the disparities that he viewed between Anglophones which he belonged to and Francophones. While at McGill University he participated in the 'McGill Francais' march pressuring the school to offer more classes in French, and he supported Front d'action politique in opposing housing demolitions. Layton entered federal politics winning the NDP leadership contest on January 24, 2003, and became the representative for Toronto-Danforth. Under his leadership, the NDP boosted their seat total from 6 to 103. In 2004 the NDP saved the Liberal government from defeat by negotiating the first NDP budget, which included increased spending for affordable housing, environment, foreign aid and post-secondary training. Layton remained a federal party leader until his death on August 22, 2011, at age 61.

Part B

Jack Layton was a Canadian politician and leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) who left a lasting impact and legacy on Canadian politics. Layton is not currently commemorated in any way by the federal government, despite his national significance. Layton led the NDP from a party having only six members of parliament (MPs), to a party of 103, becoming the official opposition. The NDP shapes the two-party plus system currently seen in Canadian federal politics. Upon Layton's death, he was given a state funeral as an eminent Canadian by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper. His death was marked by an outpouring of support and appreciation across the country and across party lines. This essay will argue that due to Layton's national significance, his current commemorations are not sufficient and that he should be federally recognized through a program to commemorate opposition leaders.

Section 1 - Who Was He

The first aspect of Layton's commemoration that will be examined is who he was, and what he did in his life. Layton is primarily remembered by Canadians for being a federal politician, and in particular, leader of the NDP. His life and achievements can be separated into three categories; his childhood and early adulthood, his political career, and his death and funeral.

The first aspect of Layton's life that will be examined is his childhood and early adulthood. Jack Layton, also named John Gilbert Layton, was born on July 18th, 1950 in Montreal, Quebec, and was raised in nearby Hudson Quebec.¹ He was born to parents Robert

¹ Douglas Slobod and Abraham Fuks, "Military Metaphors and Friendly Fire," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ) 184, no. 1 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.111438>.

Layton and Doris Steeves, both of whom were involved in politics.² His father had been active in the Liberal Party while Jack Layton was growing up, but then later converted to the Conservative Party, and was elected as an MP under the Mulroney government.³ His mother was a descendant of William Steeves, a New Brunswick Father of Confederation, and was very involved in the local church.⁴ Layton grew up in Hudson, a town booming for Montreal Anglophones who commuted into the city, as a part of the well-off English speaking population.⁵ The socio-economic divide between the French and English populations, and the effects of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960's, both during his childhood, are thought by many to be influences on his later views on Quebec.⁶ Layton went to McGill University for his undergraduate degree, where he was involved in local politics.⁷ He participated in a march called 'McGill Francais' which was a march to pressure the school to offer more classes in French, and supporting Front d'action politique which was opposing housing demolitions in his student neighbourhood.⁸

After his undergraduate degree Layton continued his education at York University's Political Science Graduate School.⁹ He wrote his thesis on foreign investment review rules, and applied neo-marxist theories.¹⁰ When he was 24 he took a teaching job at Ryerson Polytechnic Institute, later renamed Ryerson University, and currently in the process of being renamed

² John Geddes, "The Making of Jack Layton: He Grew up in Montreal's Anglo Establishment, Spending Summers at the Yacht Club. Now He's the Left-Wing Firebrand Remaking Canadian Politics. The Life and Times of the Leader of the Official Opposition.(Cover Story)," *Maclean's* (Toronto) 124, no. 24 (2011).

³ Kady O'Malley, "A Quick Primer on the Eight New NDP MPs: There's a Magazine Editor, a Grade 9 Dropout, a Former Ontario Solicitor General, a Town Councillor," *The Hill Times*, Jul 2004, 13, <http://proxy.lib.trentu.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/quick-primer-on-eight-new-ndp-mps-there-s-magazine/docview/208537147/se-2?accountid=14391>.

⁴ Geddes, "The Making of Jack Layton."

⁵ Geddes, "The Making of Jack Layton."

⁶ John Geddes, "The real Jack: an activist and an intellectual, Layton was the rare politician whose passion came from deep within," *Maclean's*, September 12, 2011.

⁷ Geddes, "The real Jack."

⁸ Geddes, "The Making of Jack Layton."

⁹ Geddes, "The real Jack."

¹⁰ Geddes, "The Making of Jack Layton."

again.¹¹ In 1982 Layton won his first elected position as a Toronto City Councillor.¹² He remained a city council member until 1991 when he lost his bid to be Toronto's Mayor.¹³ On January 24, 2003, Layton won the NDP leadership contest on the first ballot.¹⁴ Nearly a year later Layton won a seat in the House of Commons in his riding of Toronto-Danforth.¹⁵ In the 2004 election he as NDP leader boosted their seat total from six to 19, then to 29 in 2006, 37 in 2008 and finally to 103 in 2011.¹⁶ In the 2004 election the Liberals had a minority government, so Layton's NDP had more influence.¹⁷ The NDP saved the Liberal government from defeat, and negotiated a budget that included billions in spending for affordable housing, environment, foreign aid and post-secondary training, often called the first NDP budget.¹⁸ Layton remained a federal party leader as leader of the NDP from 2003 until his death in 2011.¹⁹

Jack Layton died on August 22, 2011, at age 61.²⁰ When Layton died he was the official opposition leader, a position not typically granted a state funeral. State funerals in Canada are granted to "present and former Governors General, present and former Prime Ministers and sitting members of the Ministry" as well as other eminent Canadians as offered by the Prime Minister.²¹ Layton was offered a state funeral by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper as he was

¹¹ Geddes, "The Making of Jack Layton."

¹² Geddes, "The real Jack"

¹³ Geddes, "The Making of Jack Layton."

¹⁴ Geddes, "The real Jack."

¹⁵ O'Malley, "A Quick Primer on the Eight New NDP MPs: There's a Magazine Editor, a Grade 9 Dropout, a Former Ontario Solicitor General, a Town Councillor," 13.

¹⁶ Geddes, "The real Jack."

¹⁷ *Keith Boag on Jack Layton's Impact on the NDP*. The National - CBC Television. (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2011).

¹⁸ Bruce Campion-Smith, "Good for Canada, Layton Declares; Commons Backs 'First NDP Budget' Party Hints it has More on Wish List: [MET Edition]," *Toronto Star*, May 20, 2005.

<http://proxy.lib.trentu.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/good-canada-layton-declares-commons-backs-first/docview/438826726/se-2?accountid=14391>.

¹⁹ Slobod and Fuks, "Military Metaphors and Friendly Fire."

²⁰ Slobod and Fuks, "Military Metaphors and Friendly Fire."

²¹ "Frequently asked questions," Government of Canada, State funerals and national commemorative ceremonies, <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/questions-state-funerals.html>

viewed to be an eminent Canadian.²² His state funeral lasted from August 24-27, 2011 where his remains lay for public visitation in the foyer of the House of Commons in Ottawa, then at Toronto City Hall, followed by a state funeral at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto.²³ His remains were cremated and spread in three locations; Cote St. Charles United Church, Quebec, where his father and maternal grandparents are buried, Toronto Island where he and his second wife Olivia Chow were married, and St. James' Cemetery in Toronto where he lived and had his constituency.²⁴ Upon his death there was an outpouring of public support and sorrow.²⁵

Jack Layton led an impactful life. He was politically active very early in his life, and remained so until his death. He made a profound impact on Toronto where he was city councillor, the NDP party which he led, and Canada as a whole. Layton was a nationally significant figure at the time he lived, but his impacts on Canada go beyond his death and thus he should be commemorated so his influence is remembered.

Section 2 - Existing Commemorations

The second aspect of a Jack Layton commemoration that will be discussed are existing recognitions of Layton. Currently, there are three commemorations of him, two municipal, and one private. While these commemorations are meaningful, they lack interpretation, and are not as significant as a federal commemoration. These commemorations include; a park in Hudson, Quebec, a ferry terminal, and a statue in Toronto, Ontario.

²² “State funeral for late NDP leader Jack Layton cost \$368,326: document,” *National Post*, Aug 30, 2012, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/state-funeral-for-late-ndp-leader-jack-layton-cost-368326-document>.

²³ “State Funeral of Jack Layton,” Government of Canada, Past state funerals and national commemorative ceremonies, <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/past-state-funerals-commemorations/jack-layton.html>.

²⁴ “Jack Layton's 'passion, civility' honoured at funeral,” CBC News, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/jack-layton-s-passion-civility-honoured-at-funeral-1.1001185>.

²⁵ “State funeral for late NDP leader Jack Layton cost \$368,326: document.”

The first commemoration of Jack Layton that will be discussed is a park in Hudson Quebec. The park, located at 392 Halcro Hudson, Québec was re-named after Layton's death.²⁶ It is located near the Ottawa River, and the Lake of Two Mountains, as well as being near downtown Hudson.²⁷ The city of Hudson boasts of its picnic tables, benches, trails, a public boat launch, truck and trailer parking, as well as it being a popular location for photographers.²⁸ Hudson is a significant location for a Jack Layton memorial to be placed as it was where Layton grew up, and spent most of his childhood.²⁹ This park is a municipal park, and as such this is a municipal commemoration. While the park is beautiful, it lacks interpretation as there appears to be no plaques speaking to how the name came about, or the relevance of Layton to the local community.

The second commemoration of Jack Layton that will be discussed is a ferry terminal in Toronto, Ontario. In 2012 the Toronto Ferry Terminal was re-named by Toronto city council to be the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal.³⁰ The ferry that leaves from this dock is a municipal ferry travelling to the Toronto Islands, and as such its renaming was a municipal commemoration.³¹ The renaming of this ferry terminal was unique as Mayor Rob Ford waived the typical two-year waiting period.³² This waiting period typically requires the city to wait two years after a person's death before naming something in their honour.³³ The motion to re-name this terminal passed council unanimously.³⁴ Toronto is a significant location for a Layton memorial as Layton sat on

²⁶ "Jack Layton Park," Town of Hudson, <https://hudson.quebec/en/location/jack-layton-park/>.

²⁷ "Parc Jack-Layton," Vaudreuil Soulanges, Attractions, <https://tourismevaldreuil-soulanges.com/en/attraction/parc-jack-layton>.

²⁸ Vaudreuil Soulanges, "Parc Jack-Layton."

²⁹ *A park was named in honour of the late Jack Layton in Hudson, Quebec*, The National - CBC Television, (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2012).

³⁰ "Toronto ferry terminal to be renamed in honour of Jack Layton," CBC News, Toronto News, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-ferry-terminal-to-be-renamed-in-honour-of-jack-layton-1.1246826>.

³¹ CBC News, "Toronto ferry terminal to be renamed in honour of Jack Layton."

³² Justin Skinner, "Proposal to name Toronto Island ferry terminal after Jack Layton," toronto.com news, <https://www.toronto.com/news-story/78434-proposal-to-name-toronto-island-ferry-terminal-after-jack-layton/>.

³³ Skinner, "Proposal to name Toronto Island ferry terminal after Jack Layton."

³⁴ CBC News, "Toronto ferry terminal to be renamed in honour of Jack Layton."

the Toronto city council for many years, and was a Toronto MP.³⁵ While this is a meaningful commemoration, being in both a popular location and a meaningful one, it also lacks interpretation. There were no explanatory plaques or interpretations placed after the naming of the terminal, only the name was changed. While the re-naming is meaningful, interpretation is needed.

The third commemoration of Jack Layton that will be discussed is a statue of Layton in Toronto. This statue is a life-sized bronze statue of Layton riding a tandem bike.³⁶ It is made for people to sit in the seat in front of him, as the message is that “Jack’s got your back”.³⁷ This memorial was unveiled on August 22nd 2013 by the Ontario Federation of Labour.³⁸ It was created by David Pellettier, primarily with donations from labour unions.³⁹ It sits on land donated by the city of Toronto, and is in the same area as the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal.⁴⁰ This is a private commemoration, as it was placed and funded by independent groups. It is meaningful, and has an interesting interactive message. It also lacks interpretation, and is only named, not explained. While this is an interesting and valuable commemoration, if someone was unaware of who Layton was or what his impacts were, they would not be able to fully understand the commemoration as it is not interpreted.

In conclusion, while Jack Layton has three beautiful and meaningful memorials, they lack interpretation and this means a degree of pre-existing knowledge is required for the public to

³⁵ CBC News, “Toronto ferry terminal to be renamed in honour of Jack Layton.”

³⁶ *Jack Layton memorial statue unveiled*, The National - CBC Television, (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013).

³⁷ “ADVISORY: OFL to Unveil Life-Sized Bronze Statue of Jack Layton at Toronto’s Waterfront,” Marketwired Toronto, <http://proxy.lib.trentu.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/advisory-ofl-unveil-life-sized-bronze-st-atue-jack/docview/1426545251/se-2?accountid=14391>.

³⁸ *Jack Layton memorial statue unveiled*, The National - CBC Television.

³⁹ Marketwired Toronto, “ADVISORY: OFL to Unveil Life-Sized Bronze Statue of Jack Layton at Toronto’s Waterfront.”

⁴⁰ Noor Javeed, “Jack Layton Memorial comes to life,” Toronto Star, https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/08/19/jack_layton_memorial_comes_to_life.html

understand these commemorations. These commemorations are at the municipal and private level, and Layton was also a federally important figure, which is not recognized through existing memorials. It is important for future commemorations of Layton to be federally initiated and provide an interpretation, by explaining who Layton was, and what his significance and impacts were.

Section 3 – Where and What Should the Commemoration Be

The third aspect of Jack Layton's commemoration that will be examined is where and what his commemoration should be. Jack Layton was a federal politician with national significance. Yet, to date, there are no federal commemorations for him. This essay proposes that a federal commemoration be placed for Layton at Cote St. Charles United Church Cemetery, and this is placed under a program to recognize opposition leaders.

The first question that will be addressed is where the commemoration of Layton should be placed. One possible location for a Layton commemoration would be at the Cote St. Charles United Church. This would be a good location for a commemoration as it is one of three locations where Layton's ashes were scattered, and is in the town where he grew up.⁴¹ It is also a practical location for a commemoration to be placed. This church is near a road, and has open space near this road for a commemoration, like a plaque, to be placed without disturbing any other graves, wildlife, or buildings.⁴² Placing Layton's commemoration on this site would both be a meaningful one, as it is a part of his childhood, but also a practical one, as there is a clear location as to where a commemoration could be placed.

⁴¹ CBC News, "Jack Layton's 'passion, civility' honoured at funeral."

⁴² "Cote St Charles United Church: 2500 Chemin St Charles," Google Maps, Street View, [https://www.google.ca/maps/@45.4302645,-74.1767623,3a,75y,114.61h,90t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1sCAazagAIVGk5Lq3jpxd_CQ!2e0!6shttps:%2F%2Fstreetviewpixels-pa.googleapis.com%2Fv1%2Fthumbnail%3Fpanoid%3DCAazagAIVGk5Lq3jpxd_CQ!2e0!6shttps:%2F%2Fstreetviewpixels-pa.googleapis.com%2Fv1%2Fthumbnail%3Fpanoid%3DCAazagAIVGk5Lq3jpxd_CQ%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D123.12628%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100!7i13312!8i6656](https://www.google.ca/maps/@45.4302645,-74.1767623,3a,75y,114.61h,90t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1sCAazagAIVGk5Lq3jpxd_CQ!2e0!6shttps:%2F%2Fstreetviewpixels-pa.googleapis.com%2Fv1%2Fthumbnail%3Fpanoid%3DCAazagAIVGk5Lq3jpxd_CQ%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D123.12628%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100!7i13312!8i6656)

The second question that will be addressed is what the commemoration of Layton should be. One option for this would be a federal plaque. Typically, for individuals to be commemorated they must first be dead for 25 years.⁴³ Layton has not yet been dead for this long. However, some exceptions are made to this with programs such as the National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers.⁴⁴ After the death of a Canadian Prime Minister, this program creates printed and online documents outlining their contributions, protects their grave and places a Canadian flag and an informational plaque next to it.⁴⁵ This program means that the legacy and impact of Canadian Prime Ministers is remembered and protected. While Prime Ministers have a great deal of impact on Canada, they are not the only influences. Leaders of the opposition also play a large role in the parliamentary system, as they have a responsibility to critique the government and lead the second largest party in Canada. Despite their influence, there is no program in place to commemorate them after death. This essay proposes that a program, Grave Sites of Canadian Opposition Leaders, be created to commemorate these individuals after their deaths. This program would involve creating materials on their lives, protecting their graves, and placing a commemorative plaque, but would be distinguished by the Prime Minister program by not placing a Canadian flag. While Layton does not have a grave to protect, his memory could still be protected through the other elements of this program. This would allow for influential Canadian political leaders, like Jack Layton, to be commemorated after their deaths in a significant way.

In conclusion, Jack Layton should be commemorated for his impact and influence on Canada as a whole. This should be done at the Cote St. Charles United Church in Hudson,

⁴³ "Main Criteria and Guidelines," History and culture, <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/clmhc-hsmbc/ncp-pcn/evaluation>.

⁴⁴ "National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers," History and Culture. <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/clmhc-hsmbc/sep-gra>.

⁴⁵ "National Program for the Grave Sites of Canadian Prime Ministers."

Quebec where he was raised and offers a practical location for his commemoration. It should be done under a new program, Grave Sites of Canadian Opposition Leaders, and would involve creating informational materials, and placing a commemorative plaque for this cemetery. Overall, the impact of other opposition leaders and Layton should not be forgotten, and commemorations like this could help Canadians to remember their influence for years to come.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Jack Layton was an influential, and nationally significant figure in Canada and Canadian politics. Throughout his life, he fought for change and was involved in the communities in which he lived. He made an impact nationally through his involvement in the NDP, leading them to become a significant national party and the official opposition. While Layton currently has some small commemorations, including municipal and private, these commemorations lack interpretation and are not federally initiated despite his national significance, and thus do not fully demonstrate the impact that Layton had on Canada. A more impactful way to commemorate Layton would be through the creation of a new program, Grave Sites of Canadian Opposition Leaders, to commemorate Layton and other Canadian opposition leaders throughout history. As Layton's remains were spread in three locations, his plaque could be placed at the Cote St. Charles United Church as this is where he was raised, and it is a practical location for a plaque to be placed. Layton throughout his life made an impact on Canada, Canadians, and Canadian politics. This contribution should be remembered and respected through a national commemoration.

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