



TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO

NDP leader Jack Layton is being fondly remembered in Whitchurch-Stouffville this week.

Layton 'will be hard to follow': NDP worker

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Jack Layton was in the infancy of his political career when Stouffville's Mylene Freeman was born.

This week, the 22-year-old rookie NDP MP for Argenteuil-Papineau-Mirabel Quebec is mourning the loss of her party's leader.

"It's a very, very hard day," Ms Freeman said in an interview with The Sun-Tribune. "We're trying to remember him as a very positive man."

Ms Freeman was part of the Orange Crush this past May that saw the Bloc Quebecois fall to the NDPs.

Ms Freeman worked with Mr. Layton for a short time this past June.

"He's got such a presence," she said. "Working with him was just the best experience I've had."

Although Ms Freeman's time with Mr. Layton was brief, it made a lasting impression.

"He made you feel we could make this world a better place," she said. "He was exactly the way in person, the way he was in public. Just this amazing person. A great Canadian who could think his way through difficult situations."

That characteristic is just one of the reasons Stouffville resident Jim Sanders has been a long-time NDP supporter.

"(During the last election) he was so reasonable and willing to listen to people and bring them along," said the former Whitchurch-Stouffville councillor. "I like Jack's idea of how he brought people together and he was always

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trying to do that."

Mr. Sanders never met Mr. Layton, but upon hearing the news of his death Monday morning, he felt "sadness. You just want to sit down and wonder what it's all about."

Joe Whitfield, the provincial Oak Ridges-Markham NDP candidate, met Mr. Layton during Toronto's Pride Parade July 3.

"He's always been the person to emulate," the Markham teacher said while campaigning in Stouffville Tuesday afternoon. "He's definitely what inspired me."

"I think there's Jack Layton in all of us."

Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emmerson met Mr. Layton briefly, about 12 to 15 years ago, at an event in Toronto.

"He was a colourful man," Mr. Emmerson said during Tuesday's town council meeting. "A great Canadian, a great politician."

Mr. Layton announced he was taking a leave of absence as party leader July 25 to fight cancer. He previously won a battle against prostate cancer.

"We were giving him the time to fight the cancer and come back and he was always optimistic because that's the way he approached it," Ms Freeman said, noting she is not aware of the type of cancer Mr. Layton died from. "We knew it was very serious."

Mr. Layton's funeral will take place Saturday at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto.

"It'll be hard to follow him," Mr. Sanders said.

VOICES

"(Jack Layton) was exactly the way in person, the way he was in public. Just this amazing person. A great Canadian who could think his way through difficult situations."

Stouffville native Mylene Freeman
NDP MP for Argenteuil-Papineau-Mirabel, Que.

"(During the last election) he was so reasonable and willing to listen to people and bring them along. I like Jack's idea of how he brought people together and he was always trying to do that."

Jim Sanders
Stouffville NDP supporter

"He was a colourful man. A great Canadian, a great politician."

Wayne Emmerson
Mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville

"He was a great Canadian, a great loss to all of us. He was the true embodiment of what Canada stood for. His successor has big shoes to fill and hopefully he's half the person Jack was."

Suze Joyce
Stouffville merchant

"He's always been the person to emulate. He's definitely what inspired me. I think there's Jack Layton in all of us."

Joe Whitfield
provincial Oak Ridges-Markham
NDP candidate.

"I'm sorry he's dead, but I didn't like anything he did ... not my political cup of tea."

Kevin Wallwork
Stouffville resident

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Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP

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