

BULLETIN

## Farewell Jack

September 1, 2011

### The Report: September 2011 vol.32 num.3

**LIKE AN INCREDIBLE NUMBER OF CANADIANS**, I felt a personal connection to Jack Layton.

Of course we could count on him to stand up for the things that matter to our membership and all Canadians. In 2005, in spite of helming a caucus far smaller than the breakthrough group elected just a few months ago, he cannily forced the Liberal government to divert \$4.6 billion in funding towards much-needed investments in education, public transit and affordable housing.

A strong supporter of public health care and the HSA members who make it work, he advocated tirelessly to hire more health care professionals, shorten wait times, and improve access to home care, long-term care and prescription medicine. In his final campaign he committed to negotiating a new ten-year health accord with the provinces that would guarantee a strong and consistent contribution by the federal government and insist that provinces make a clear, monitored and enforced commitment to respect the principles of the Canada Health Act and to the modernization of health care.

But it goes beyond that.

Whenever I met Jack, hed shake my hand, lean forward, look me in the eye and ask me how I was doing, what was on the minds of HSA members, and what we thought about particular developments in health care and politics. It wasnt just that he was well-informed about health care issues and the priorities of HSA members; Jack had that rare ability to connect easily with the people he met, even if only briefly. Even though he met daily with dozens if not hundreds of people, when you spoke with him he made you feel like you were the most important person in the room.

He extended this respect even to his political opponents. While he never backed down from what he believed, and spoke strongly in opposition to the things that made life harder for ordinary Canadians, he never gave into the spite, anger and personal invective that has come to characterize so much of our politics, and has discouraged so many voters.

Jack Layton has left us all a towering legacy of public policy achievements. But it is this lesson on how to treat each other that is perhaps most important of all. 

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