



# Jonathan Wilkinson

NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

September 21st, 2022

## A family reunion of strangers

This past Sunday morning, North Vancouver's Inter River Park played host to a reunion of a special kind of family that had been coming together each September for decades – until, for the past two years, it could not... due to COVID.

This family's link is deeper than bloodlines... It's the connection of knowing from a fleeting moment of eye contact that you and that person over there share something that fills both your hearts. It's the feeling that, somehow, you've all been called to a common place to honour and celebrate something profoundly good and inspiring.

For the most part, it was a reunion of a family of strangers – yet no introductions were needed. Friends who were there tell me there were lots of smiles and a collective sense of relief at finally being able to come together again as a North Vancouver community in an expression of support for a cause and legacy that began 42 years ago – before some of them were even born.

As just about every school child in Canada knows, it was on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1980, that Terry Fox was forced to end his Marathon of Hope.

After losing his leg to cancer at 18, Terry set out to do the impossible: run across Canada, one marathon a day, in pursuit of his dream of a world without cancer. Terry cut short his run when the cancer he thought he had fought off returned. But Terry's dream lived on with the birth of the annual Terry Fox Community Run held across Canada and around the world.

His cause became our collective cause, not only because of what he did but the way he did it – with a humility that was distinct. And he did it by his rules in a way that spoke to his integrity, courage and determination.

### Living legacy

Since 1980, driven by Terry's inspiration, the foundation that bears his name has raised more than \$850 million in support of cutting-edge cancer research that has resulted in advanced treatments not even

imagined 42 years ago – providing health and hope for millions.

His legacy is personal for many Canadian families – including mine. Like thousands of North Shore youngsters, my daughters participated in their annual school Terry Fox Run for years. My eldest daughter was a summer student at the BC Cancer Agency's Terry Fox Lab, and now works there as a researcher while she applies for medical school.

It is astonishing to think of the ripple effect through generations of one person's lived example of character traits like empathy, respect, honesty, integrity, caring, perseverance, courage, and teamwork.

### Deep yearning

Last Sunday's scene at Inter River Park reflects on the awe Terry Fox continues to inspire in Canadians. That this was the 42<sup>nd</sup> Terry Fox Run is remarkable – as is our community's unwavering support over all that time.

It says much about Terry Fox but also about us. Perhaps more than ever in these complicated times, we are yearning deeply for role models who affirm the power of virtue to change the way things are.

Terry Fox united Canadians in a way not seen before or since. We are all grateful for his life and for those who are following in his slipstream.

This was a week during which Canadians also reflected on the momentous life of the Queen.

I hope I was able to adequately echo the feelings of so many North Vancouver constituents who contacted my office with the words I wrote in Canada's official Book of Condolences:

“Her Majesty the Queen dedicated her life to public service. She exercised this lifelong duty with immense dignity and grace.

Her contribution to Canada and service to Canadians will forever remain an important part of our country's history.”

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