



# Jonathan Wilkinson

NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

NOVEMBER 16, 2018

## Killer whale a symbol of urgency

When I was a kid, family vacations typically involved piling into our Volkswagen van, heading into the boreal forest of northern Saskatchewan, throwing our canoes into a lake or river and paddling off into the wilderness.

Summers in my teens were spent working at a fishing and canoeing outfitter and sometimes at the log cabin my parents had built on a lake eight miles from the nearest road.

The wilderness I fell in love with from my earliest memories was an ecosystem still truly in balance.

This deeply imprinted a frame of reference that I believe explains my passion for some of the work I now do on your behalf as Canada's Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard – and prior to that as the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

### Focused on species at risk

Since being elected in 2015, there is no dossier on which I have spent more time and energy than species at risk. My initial assignment in this area dealt with threats to critical habitat of the Western Chorus Frog – where our government eventually stepped in and implemented emergency protection on privately held lands.

A bit later, I spent nearly two and a half years working with provinces and territories to define pathways for the protection and recovery of boreal and Southern Mountain Caribou herds in ways that would be as sensitive as possible to the concerns of local economic interests.

In my current role as Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard I have devoted significant effort working on developing similar pathways for effective protection and recovery of both the North Atlantic Right Whale on the east coast and the Southern Resident Killer Whale here on the west coast.

### Climate change cross roads

We are at a cross roads. The impacts of climate change combined with the lack of appropriate consideration of the environmental impacts of human activity over past decades has resulted in the declining health of ecosystems here in Canada and around the world. A recently-released World Wildlife Fund report highlights the fact that in

just 40 years we've lost 60% of the world's wildlife.

Canada's Species at Risk Act (SARA) became law in 2002 to provide protection for at risk species and to require actions that would promote species recovery. However, governments have primarily focused on listing of species, reporting and some recovery planning rather than direct action to address biodiversity decline.

Presently 771 species in Canada have been assessed as at risk. To put this in context, in 2010, there were 470 species. SARA has not – as implemented to date – halted the decline in biodiversity in Canada.

Fundamentally, beginning the task of turning current trends around will require real recovery plans, real recovery actions and very real political will.

### Political will and dollars

Such political will is evident in actions our government has taken to protect endangered whales off our coasts. Two years ago, we invested approximately \$800 million in initiatives under the Oceans Protection Plan that directly or indirectly benefit these whales. In Budget 2018 we announced a further \$167 million in funding for programming dedicated to protecting endangered whales.

Then, two weeks ago, Minister of Transport Marc Garneau and I announced an additional \$61.5 million to enhance the already unprecedented effort to protect and restore the Southern Resident Killer Whale population in the Salish Sea.

This additional funding will support a comprehensive suite of actions that will address all three key threats facing the SRKW population – prey availability, acoustic and physical disturbances from boats and contaminants in the water. The bulk of these new measures will be in place by the time the whales return to Canadian waters in greater numbers in late spring.

The Southern Resident Killer Whale has come to symbolize the urgency of the need for real, thoughtful action to protect and enhance biodiversity. The Government of Canada is making a comprehensive, long-term and sustained effort to help these whales survive and recover.

Canadians are counting on us to do no less.

## CONTACT INFO:

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE: 102 West 3rd Street, North Vancouver  
EMAIL: [Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca) | TEL: 604-775-6333