



# Jonathan Wilkinson

NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

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## One father's gift

“My father didn’t tell me how to live; he lived - and let me watch him do it.”

Those beautiful and insightful words from American writer Clarence Budington Kelland came to mind this Fathers’ Day as I reflected on the lasting inheritance granted me by my father – Paul Wilkinson.

His lessons are enduring and continue to nurture my relationship with my own children, with the natural world and with my life in politics.

My dad is someone who has always been highly empathetic and altruistic. He has been concerned – first and foremost - for the plight of others less fortunate ... and his career journey affirms this.

When I was very young, he worked as a community development officer in Moosonee, Ontario - a town on the Moose River, 20 kilometers south of James Bay. It was the late 1960’s - a time when stark economic and cultural divides existed in how our society related to Indigenous peoples – which made his work both challenging but also enormously rewarding.

After a few years, he moved to Saskatoon to work with the Company of Young Canadians - a voluntary agency of the government of Canada, established with a mandate to encourage social, economic and community development in Canada.

My dad subsequently worked for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and taught at the University of Regina’s Department of Indian Social Work – as it was then called.

He later returned to his roots as a community development worker for the Province of Saskatchewan - working to address underemployment, poverty, health and other disparities faced by Indigenous peoples in Saskatoon.

### Turning ideals into action

In the mid-90s, he was a founder of the Quint Development Corporation in Saskatoon’s equivalent of the Downtown Eastside. Today, Quint

has grown to include a number of housing and employment programs, and numerous social enterprises including a partnership in Station 20 West - which my father also helped found. There is a plaque on the outside of Station 20 that attests to the critical importance of the work he did in bringing this idea into being.

Paul Wilkinson was and remains motivated almost entirely by the social good. Fairness and social justice animated pretty much everything he’s done throughout his life. Life for him – and for us as a family of six - was never about material possessions or acquired wealth.

My strong attachment to the concepts of equality of opportunity and of the importance of social justice come from my upbringing, I have no doubt.

### Enhancing political discourse

If there is one aspect of the way Dad conducted himself that I would like to see in Canada’s political life, it is this: empathy for others - and a related ability to listen deeply to those with different points of view to try to get to a place where we truly can bridge differences - something that, at times, is sorely lacking in our current political discourse.

At the end of the day, society - at least to my mind – is not simply a collection of individuals. It is a collective concerned about all its members - their situation... their potential for advancement... and our shared interdependence with the natural world.

These convictions guide my journey as your representative, your Member of Parliament for North Vancouver. It is an article of faith acquired - not because Dad told me how to live. He just lived - “and let me watch him do it.”

And for that I am forever grateful.

A slightly belated “Happy Father’s Day” to all those everywhere who have earned the coveted title of “Dad.”

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