



# Jonathan Wilkinson

NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

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## Making a strong team stronger

I suppose an abandoned pet hamster left curled up outside the door of my constituency office last week could be taken as an encouraging sign...

My constituency team and I have been working hard to position the office as a welcoming place focused on providing constituents with help and support. But I'll admit the hamster was a bit of a head-scratcher.

The role my constituency office plays has been very much on my mind since the Prime Minister appointed me to the federal Cabinet as Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard a few weeks ago.

As you might expect, there are now a number of additional demands on my schedule. But my most fundamental job remains representing and supporting my constituents as the Member of Parliament for North Vancouver.

So, last week, my four-person local constituency team and I convened a half-day discussion to make a strong team even stronger. We developed an action plan to respond to the reality that I will now likely have a bit less time here in the riding.

### Little office, big output

Our small 678 square foot office at 3rd and Lonsdale already handles a pretty astonishing workload: 500 emails, 50 phone calls and 25 "walk-ins" per week. Plus, we generally receive 10-15 constituent requests a week for face to face meetings.

Case work is fundamental to what we do because this is where we have the greatest opportunity to help people directly – people who are often in stressful situations. This is a major component of the team's workload.

Seventy-five per cent of the nearly 700 cases the office has handled since October 2015 have been immigration-related. Ten per cent involve helping facilitate issues involving pensions, Guaranteed Income Supplements and disability benefits. Another ten per cent involve the Canada Revenue Agency with the remainder including a variety of issues with other federal departments. We typically have 200 active cases at any given time - and each week brings another 10-15.

Managing expectations is important – we cannot commit to solving problems – but we can obtain relevant information, clarify a confused

situation and we can often nudge things along.

### Getting back to you

We've set demanding service standards. For casework, we aim to get back within a day or two to gather information and we'll typically have an initial response to the constituent within a week. For correspondence, every inquiry that requests a response receives one – and not the form letter variety. (My staff knows only too well that one of the issues that concerns me greatly is hearing from a constituent that they did not receive a response.)

The action plan we developed last week involves a new staff structure. We created a new position of Constituency Director to oversee all constituency operations in North Vancouver and on Parliament Hill which will be staffed by the highly capable Victoria Rowbotham. Victoria works closely with Braden McMillan, the Manager of Constituency Communications and Outreach.

Matt Ritchie in my Parliament Hill office works closely with my North Van team on legislative and policy issues, correspondence and scheduling. We will soon have openings for a new Constituency Caseworker and Constituency Office Administrator. My strong preference would be to have qualified North Vancouver residents in those positions - so if you know of someone please call the office for a job description.

I'm confident the team, new staff structure and new operations protocols will take our constituency office performance to the next level to serve you.

### Reaching me

My MP contact information remains: [Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca). However, if you wish to connect with me on a matter related to my role as Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard it's best to reach me at [MIN.XNCR@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:MIN.XNCR@dfo-mpo.gc.ca).

Finally, in case you were wondering about the hamster, he (or she) was well fed and watered while we launched an unsuccessful Facebook appeal to locate its owner. And so, unfortunately, the best we could do for this little constituent was a ride to the SPCA.

Wishing you all a pleasant, relaxing rest of summer!

## CONTACT INFO:

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