

Range and depth in youth engagement

To encourage young people to engage in discussion of public policy issues and promote participation in our democratic system, I have hosted a Constituency Youth Council (CYC) since my election to Parliament in 2015. The Council provides opportunities for me, as the local MP, to hear directly from young people between the ages of 15 to 24 regarding their concerns, thoughts and aspirations.



The North Vancouver 2020/21 Constituency Youth Council has certainly been challenged by COVID-19. It has had to operate in a manner that is quite different from earlier councils. This year's CYC came together in October 2020, and has been meeting regularly, virtually, since then. The highly motivated and thoughtful group of young North Vancouverites has a keen interest in issues of importance to their demographic and their community.

This year's CYC has also been structured differently from past years: each individual is a member of one of four committees –Governmental Affairs, Communications and Social Media, Events and Activities, and Outreach and Community. Every two weeks, the full Youth Council meets and one of the four committees presents a topic related to their area of focus. Each committee selects the topics they will research—and clearly all of the topics selected are issues of importance to youth in North Vancouver. There has been quite a range:

- The Governmental Affairs Committee focused on how Canada would be directly impacted if candidate Biden vs. then-President Trump won the US election. The committee focused primarily on trade, technology, immigration, defense, and environment.
- The Events and Activities Committee chose to examine current political events in each provinces to showcase the differing issues that people are facing across the country.
- The Communications and Social Media Committee decided to go with a topic related to bias in news media, and how the same story or event is reported by different news publications - for example, how COVID vaccines were being reported in the National Post vs. CBC vs. Rebel Media.
- The Outreach and Community Committee chose to focus on how different people or organizations are trying to engage youth within their communities.

It is truly great to see this group of young people so engaged in discussion of important issues of public policy. Every year, I am impressed by the interest and depth of consideration that Youth Council members bring to the table.

The Constituency Youth Council is a non-partisan body aimed at furthering the involvement of youth in public discourse. If you are interested in being a part of the council, applications are open on a rolling basis; **please email Kelly Perrais at my office for further information: Kelly.perrais.821@parl.gc.ca**

Seymour Success Story

In February, I went with Shaun Hollingsworth of the Seymour Salmonid Society to the Seymour River to witness the results of the very determined work undertaken over the past five years. You will remember that just over six years ago, tons of rock slid off the west side of the river bank, just upstream from the top of Riverside Drive in North Vancouver. The blockage caused a lake to form, destroyed a bridge, and blocked salmon and steelhead runs in the river.

The Salmonid Society, mostly local volunteers who operate a small hatchery below the Seymour Dam, worked feverishly with the Squamish and Tsleil Waututh Nations, regional, municipal, provincial and federal governments to come up with a plan to save the river's fish populations and to restore the watercourse.

With funding that came from a number of sources, including significant grants from Fisheries and Oceans Canada through BCSRIF, the fish channels have been re-opened,such that there are now a number of salmon and steelhead swimming in both directions.

"The salmon have been here for millennia. The community has really come together since the slide to work to open the blockage and assure that there are fish in the river for future generations," Shaun explained as we viewed the slide site.

To find out more about the Seymour Salmonid Society, check out their website: seymoursalmon.com



Zanzibar Holdings plants the tough spots

When North Van local Tony Harrison learned there were seedlings left over from last year due to COVID-caused planting interruptions, he set to work to ensure the trees got in the ground.

Tony co-owns (with North Vancouver resident Gord Saunders) Zanzibar Holdings, a silviculture company focused on sustainability and ethical operating practices. He didn't want to see the seedlings – which as trees assist with ecosystem enhancement and carbon sequestration – go to waste. Zanzibar is in the business of planting trees – they've planted 500 million seedlings over the past 40 years.

The focus of the replanting project was on "non-obligation" locations in wildfire burn regions – places deemed low on the priority list for replanting. The project would protect biodiversity , sequester carbon, provide jobs and bring communities together in a common goal.

"This effort has enabled an opportunity to plant trees that might have otherwise been wasted, and has allowed a valuable carbon initiative – to get part of the 2 Billion Trees Canada has committed to plant – to move forward," Tony said recently.



It took months to get all of the working parts together. In the end, after much hard work, Tony was successful but he is quick to point out that other agencies and people were key to making this happen. They included Environment and Climate Change Canada; Diane Nichol, Chief Forester for British Columbia; Beth MacNeil, Assistant Deputy Minister, Natural Resources Canada; the NGO One Tree Planted and local First Nations.

Things came together just in time for this spring's planting season. This is a great story of local initiative that is providing wider benefits for all British Columbians, and ultimately, for the planet.

For more information about Zanzibar Holdings Inc, check out their website: zanzibar.ca

In The Community



A new greenhouse goes up at Loutet Farm

Meeting with Women in Science representatives



Bruce Peters and Janine Cannon at Zazou's

Our constituency office is open by pre-arranged appointment. Please call to book a time should you wish to visit. All services are available by phone, email and virtual platforms.

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SPRING 2021

North Vancouver Constituent Update



Risk management and staying the course

From the outset, Canada has applied basic principles of risk management to shape our path through to the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic and minimize lasting negative impacts. This applies to various elements of the health crisis such as the economy, and certainly to issues related to vaccine procurement and delivery. Now those same principles are pointing to perhaps our most significant risk during this period when the crisis has manifest in a serious second wave – that risk is the social dimension of our human nature.

More on that in a moment... but first, a few thoughts about vaccines through a risk management lens, as citizens in BC and in this riding are queuing up in greater numbers to receive their jab.



"Our approach to procuring and delivering vaccines has to adapt to the rapidly changing and volatile global marketplace."

COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The federal government is responsible for procuring vaccines and distributing them to the provinces and territories. Provincial and territorial officials, who manage the health care systems, handle the logistics of delivering doses and decide which groups to prioritize. Overall, federal/provincial/territorial collaboration on vaccine distribution has been strong. For our part, we have committed federal resources to support the provinces and territories every step of the way.

CONT

The federal government has:

- procured hundreds of ultra-low-temperature freezers for vaccine storage across the country;
- authorized over 50 different effective COVID-19 tests and continue to review and include new testing options;
- provided funding and support to upgrade and increase data management across Canada;
- distributed tens of millions of rapid tests, personal protective equipment and supplies such as needles, syringes, swabs, and gauze;
- and, not unimportantly, provided detailed vaccine delivery schedules so provinces and territories could plan effectively.

SUPPLY RISKS

There continue to be risks in the global vaccine marketplace, from supply chain issues to manufacturing. But with sustained collaboration, millions more Canadians are now vaccinated, and all Canadians who choose will be vaccinated within months. We are also much closer to being able to manufacture approved vaccines right here in Canada – facilities in Vancouver, Saskatoon, Montreal and Quebec City anticipate bio-manufacturing capability in the coming months.

Every one of us is tired. But if there was ever a time to double down on our efforts to limit the spread, this is it. We could very well be in the home stretch, so let's stay the course.



Recent data from countries with increased vaccination rates show that vaccines are proving very effective at preventing deaths from COVID-19 disease and slowing the spread – particularly among the most at-risk groups. And while hope is now on the horizon, we must collectively hold the fort until the fall at least. We urgently need to contain further transmission. The winter surge in cases proved that when we relax our guard, the virus moves quickly. Modelling indicates the risk of a resurgence of COVID cases in the months ahead if we do not practice the safety protocols still in place.

Which brings me back to the social aspect of human nature, emerging as possibly our most significant risk at this pivotal moment. Physical distancing, washing hands and wearing a mask all remain imperative. And while in warmer weather, steering clear of gatherings outside your immediate bubble is the most difficult thing for many of us, myself included, maintaining the smallest possible circle of contacts is critical until the vaccines have time to take effect.

Long term care – lessons learned

We are in the midst of the most serious public health crisis Canada has ever faced. There has been much suffering and we all mourn those who have passed.

The devastating outbreaks in long-term care homes across the country have highlighted the gaps in standards and care for our most vulnerable loved ones. But what of the legacy of their suffering and that of their families? What of our debt to the dedication and sacrifice of front-line workers? Do we come out of this stronger, or do we paper over the cracks that the crisis has exposed? A failure to learn from this crisis does a moral disservice to those currently suffering as a result of long-standing systemic issues.

It was on Sunday March 8th of last year that a man in his 80s became Canada's first victim of COVID19. He lived at the Lynn Valley Care Centre and was one of our own. Since then, the pandemic has exposed serious problems in several care homes - overcrowded conditions, underpaid staff with high turnover, staffing levels too low to provide adequate care and limited infection control.



A Local Story of Determination – K.R.I.S. Services

Sheldhan Simonss is a bit of an all-rounder. While trained as a welder and fabricator in his native Trinidad, his flexible and curious nature allowed him to transition as life demanded.

In 1976, Sheldhan immigrated to Canada – two years after his wife came to this country. Shortly after settling in North Vancouver, they founded a commercial cleaning business – K.R.I.S. Services – which has supported Sheldhan and his family since its incorporation in 1983. At its peak, the business employed ten full-time and four part-time sub-contractors.

Over the past 40 years, Sheldhan has weathered financial reversals and economic downturns. This past year has been particularly challenging though. “Business is down by 80% – offices are empty, and since a lot of our work focused on weddings and event companies – well, there aren’t any events happening,” he explained to me. “I’m down to one sub-contractor at the moment.”

Sheldhan had plans to scale up and then sell his business so he could retire. COVID has put that on hold. He appreciates the assistance that CERB provided for a few months last year when business came to a grinding halt.

Describing himself as semi-retired, he now has more time to write – he previously published two books through his Rose Root Publishing company. He is also a certified life coach, providing mentoring for start-up faith congregations, teaching public speaking, presentation and other skills.

As a Black entrepreneur, Sheldhan stands out on the North Shore. He recognizes the challenges faced by racialized groups in this country but said he has “never knowingly experienced racism” in this community. His attitude – one of living his life as a good person, and treating others with respect – has engendered his positive experience. Sheldhan loves the North Shore, which has been his family’s home all these years.



“I keep an open mind and a positive outlook. I like learning; I’m always reading. These things keep me going.”

There is much work to be done to make Canada a more inclusive society – Sheldhan’s story inspires optimism about our ability as a community to work to address these important issues.

For more information on Sheldon’s business, go to [kris-services.ca](https://www.kris-services.ca)

ONCE AND FOR ALL

It is long past time for a broad national dialogue that leads to lasting systemic change now, and for a better future. Although the Canada Health Act does not govern long-term-care homes, and their existence and operation are entirely up to each province, the federal government is anxious to work with the provinces and territories to find ways to ensure that new minimum standards exist for long-term care. Vulnerable seniors should be protected and well cared for no matter where they live in Canada.

Throughout the pandemic, Ottawa has been there to provide provinces and territories with resources – both financial and practical – to protect residents and front-line workers in long-term care homes. That support

includes \$1 billion under the Safe Long-term Care Fund to stem the spread of COVID-19 by improving ventilation, undertaking infection prevention assessments, hiring more staff or increasing the pay levels of existing employees.

Ultimately, though, we must also focus on the post-pandemic long term. In addition to working with the provinces and territories to establish enhanced standards for long-term care, the federal government is committed to taking additional action to help people stay in their own homes longer.

One of the greatest tragedies of this pandemic is the lives lost in long-term care homes. Our elders deserve to be safe, respected, and live in dignity. **The moment to act is here. When faced with crisis, we must ask, “If not us, who? If not now, when?”**

Tax Season is Upon Us

Every year at this time, pandemic or not, Canadians get a bit anxious about having to sort through their receipts and tax forms and file their income tax. With tax-filing season well underway (February 22 – April 30), it is important that everyone file a tax return. **If you have received CERB, CRB, EI or other COVID-related assistance in 2020, your return may need more time, so start preparing early.**

For most, the deadline to do your 2020 taxes is April 30, 2021. However, individuals can file now online. For those who owe a tax debt, the deadline to pay is also April 30, 2021.

Individuals who have never filed a return before, haven’t filed in a while, or would like to file for previous years, have several ways to do so. To get started, use the on-line step-by-step guide for filing a return.

Through the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) volunteers may be able to complete and file individuals’ taxes virtually by videoconference, by phone, or through a document drop-off arrangement. Since May 2020, the CVITP has assisted more than 170,000 people with the filing of their income tax and benefit returns. Those who cannot file electronically this year are encouraged to seek a CVITP clinic through the national directory.

Those who have self-employment income are not eligible for the CVITP. However, the Liaison Officer service helps small business owners and self-employed individuals with their tax-related questions, explains business deductions, common tax errors, provides an overview of helpful tools, and offers advice and help with setting up an effective bookkeeping system. For more information, go to [canada.ca/cra-liaison-officer](https://www.canada.ca/cra-liaison-officer).

The CRA Outreach Program provides support to community organizations that want to help clients with their taxes and their benefits. A CRA outreach officer can meet with them to provide information and answer questions on benefits and credits. To set up a meeting, go to [canada.ca/cra-outreach](https://www.canada.ca/cra-outreach).



Seniors in particular should file their taxes, even if you do not earn an income or owe money, in order to continue receiving benefits. Low- or fixed-income individuals may be eligible to use ‘File My Return Service’ which allows you to file your return by answering a few questions online. As a reminder, the one-time payments for the GST/HST credit, and the one made to seniors receiving OAS, are tax-free and do not have to be reported.

Seniors may be able to claim:

- **Canada caregiver credit** – an amount of \$2,273 and up to \$7,276 (depending on relationship between claimant and person receiving care)
- **Disability tax credit** – up to \$8,576, pending eligibility
- **Medical expense tax credit** – 3% of claimant’s or dependent’s net income or \$2,397
- **Home accessibility tax credit** – up to \$10,000 in renovation expenses paid to make the home more accessible
- **Age credit** – up to \$7,637
- **Pension income credit** – up to \$2,000
- **Pension income splitting** – Seniors may be able to jointly elect with their spouse or common-law partner to split eligible pension income

You may also find these websites helpful:

- CRA’s contact information for constituents (call centre hours have been extended with additional agents to answer inquiries): www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/contact-information.html
- Tips from the CRA on how seniors can manage their taxes and benefits: www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/news/newsroom/tax-tips/tax-tips-2021/seniors-tips-help-tax-season.html
- List of federal programs and services for seniors: www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/seniors.html

My knowledgeable office staff may assist with your questions should you not find your answers on line or by direct contact with CRA. **Call 604-775-6333 for an appointment.**