



# Jonathan Wilkinson

NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

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## A North Van centenarian's "naval weekend"

When people call my North Vancouver MP constituency office looking for a helping hand it's often because they've run out of other options. My staff receive about a dozen such calls a day for assistance of all kinds.

It's challenging yet rewarding work. And often the rewards are truly uplifting.

Such was the case when a family friend of 100-year-old Kathy Morrison called in to see if we might help solve a predicament.

During World War II, Kathy was a WREN – shorthand for those who served in the Women's Royal Naval Service. The WRENs performed a wide variety of non-combat roles ashore.

Kathy served as a WREN mechanic in the Royal Navy between 1942 and 1945. Her father, brother and husband were all in the navy as well and it's held a precious place in her heart through the years.

When she heard recently that several Canadian naval vessels were going to make a North Vancouver port call the weekend of May 5th, she mentioned to her friend how thrilled she would be to visit - but that the lengthy lineups could make that a challenge. So, her friend called my constituency office.

### Reaching out

Constituency Director Cynthia Bunbury set about trying to make arrangements for a personal tour for Kathy prior to the start of public tours. She reached out to a colleague with the Department of National Defence who, in turn, contacted the Defence Minister's office.

Cynthia then contacted Kevin Bracewell, president of the North Vancouver Veterans' Association – a military veteran currently with the RCMP. He was also eager to help and offered to connect with his contacts.

Through many years' experience advocating for constituents, Cynthia knew you can never have too many irons in the fire. So, she reached out to C.O. Sam Patchell, the captain of HMCS Ottawa. He was quick to assure a private tour was being organized and said he'd be delighted to take care of everything.

Kathy was unaware of what had been arranged until she approached the gangplank of one of the ships and was greeted by the captain. "I didn't know whether I should salute or what I should do," she said. "It was the biggest surprise I've ever had."

### VIP tour

What followed was a VIP tour of HMCS Nanaimo and HMCS Ottawa where she shared several 80-year-old photos of her time in uniform with members of the crew. She was invited to an official ceremony the next day and was surprised a second time to learn she was a guest of honour.

Kathy now refers to the experience as "her naval weekend."

Stories like this are an uplifting reminder to me and my staff of what a day-to-day privilege it is to have the opportunity to be of service to constituents like Kathy Morrison.



Veteran WREN Kathy Morrison with Lt. Commander Mike Vanderveer

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