

MAY 2010 TOWN HALL MEETINGS & COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT



NEW WESTMINSTER - COQUITLAM & PORT MOODY



Fin_{MP}
Donnelly

Building Healthy, Sustainable Communities

Dear Neighbours,

Thank you to those who attended one of the three town hall meetings I held earlier this year or submitted a written response to my community questionnaire.

There was a great deal of discussion that covered a range of topics, from the economy and employment to healthcare and the environment.

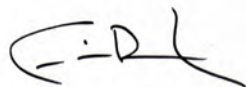
In this report, information has been arranged into three key areas: vibrant economy, healthy environment and social security. As your Member of Parliament, I plan on using this report to help guide my actions in the House of Commons. I will use this document to raise questions, propose solutions and get the job done.

Whether it is taking action on housing and homelessness, job creation and security, or protecting wild salmon, you raised a wide range of issues and concerns. I am thankful for your input.

These meetings opened a dialogue I hope to continue in the coming years. I intend to hold regular consultations including an annual series of town hall meetings. I invite you to continue to engage with me on issues that concern you.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to build a healthy, sustainable Canada.

Sincerely,



Fin Donnelly, MP
New Westminster-Coquitlam & Port Moody



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Overview



During the town hall meetings, we invited discussion on a wide diversity of topics. Over 300 people attended the town hall meetings held in each of our three communities or made a written submission.

Constituents were presented five key areas to rank in order of importance in the town hall questionnaire. In addition to healthcare, government accountability, environment, economy and crime, several participants highlighted their own areas of concern; such as education and housing. In order to better reflect this social focus, a sixth category was added.

The chart beside groups crime, social policy, healthcare and government accountability into the category of social security.

To tackle these topics, we broke them into three key areas; social security, healthy environment and vibrant economy; they are examined in detail in this report.



Summary of Issues Raised

Healthcare

Wait times, lack of federal funding, privatization, support for seniors, support for patients suffering from Lyme disease, home support, family planning, and stable federal funding for mental health.

Total Responses - 22%

Government Accountability

Fiscal leadership, prorogation, party policy, cooperation in Parliament, public service pay and senior government pensions.

Total Responses - 20%

Environment

Fish farming, Embridge Pipeline, oil extraction in Nigeria, Alberta Tar Sands, drinking water, Agricultural Land Reserve, climate change, genetically modified foods, intra-jurisdictional requirements for salt-water fishing licenses and fracking (effects on ground water).

Total Responses - 19 %

Economy

Corporate taxation, HST, pension protection, Employment Insurance reform, outsourcing of Canadian jobs, property taxes, federal rebate programs, alternative energy sector job creation (green jobs).

Total Responses - 17 %

Crime

Child luring, federal oversight of RCMP, role of the judiciary, sex offenders, funding for local restorative justice programs, improving the criminal justice system, security costs for the Olympics.

Total Responses - 13%

Social Policy

Increased access to education and daycare, support for the arts, a national affordable housing plan, increase in affordable rental stock, rent control, homelessness, public transit, the Evergreen Line, immigration reform, senior and child poverty, restore funding to KAIROS, Veterans Affairs, stricter animal cruelty language in the criminal code.

Total Responses - 9%



PROVIDING JOBS AND JOB SECURITY

“The government must stop the HST, save funds to protect our environment, and invest in public health and education”

-Thomas
New Westminster

‘The prorogation of Parliament has to stop”

- Eric & Joan
Coquitlam

‘As a Telus employee, I’ve seen dozens of my co-workers jobs shipped overseas. I’m afraid I’m next”

- Sheila
New Westminster

Canada must extend EI benefits to self-employed persons

-Pam
Coquitlam

Employment Insurance Reform

Many participants expressed their frustration with Employment Insurance and called for an increase and expansion of benefits; including a broadening of the scope of EI retraining and greater access to benefits for self-employed workers. One policy oversight that is particularly troubling is the restriction of benefits granted to those suffering from catastrophic illness. Currently, medical EI offers 15 weeks of coverage, which is insufficient for those fighting cancer and other critical illnesses.

Action: During the spring session, I will introduce a bill to double medical EI coverage (ie.30 weeks).

Harmonized Sales Tax

The number one issue raised on the economy was the introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax. Respondents across the political spectrum voiced their opposition to this new, regressive tax.

Action: Shortly after being elected, I voted against the federal Conservative HST enabling legislation (ie. amendment to the Excise Tax Act).

I continue to support my provincial colleagues by voicing our opposition to the implementation of the HST in BC.

Outsourcing of Canadian Jobs

Several participants at the New Westminster town hall meeting voiced their concerns with the off-shoring of Canadian jobs. There were several written submissions on this topic as well.

Action: We must protect and build on family-supporting jobs in our community by creating a pan-Canadian sector-based strategy. A key first step is the appointment of a Job Protection Commissioner responsible for investigating major layoffs and shutdowns.



Pension Protection

The urgent need for pension reform was raised at each of the three town hall meetings and in many of the written submissions. Canada is facing a major pension crisis with both public and private companies holding pension plans that are under-funded by millions of dollars.

Action: I raised this issue in a statement in the House of Commons in March. I am working with my New Democrat colleagues to prevent premature pension wind-ups and to ensure that the first stakeholder paid out in any corporate liquidation or sale is the pension holder.



PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

“Open-net fish farming can’t go on the way it is”
-Lila Coquitlam

‘We need to keep this planet going. Let’s look after Canada first’
- Rebecca New Westminster

‘Stop genetically modified foods and pesticides’
- Clark Coquitlam

We must invest in alternative energy in new job creation
- Martin Coquitlam

A Comprehensive Environmental Strategy

From water quality to fighting climate change, respondents passionately argued for immediate and comprehensive cross-party action on environmental protection.

Action: This May, I worked with the New Democrat caucus to pass the country’s first federal climate change legislation. The Climate Change Accountability Act (Bill C-311) will make the government accountable to Canadians for action on climate change through regular reporting on measures to achieve firm targets.

Protecting Wild Salmon

Last year witnessed one of the greatest salmon collapses in BC’s history. Nearly 10 million sockeye salmon failed to return to the Fraser River to spawn.

Action: As the New Democrat Fisheries and Oceans Critic, I introduced a Private Member’s Bill calling for the transition to closed containment of BC fish farms. I’ve also called for more resources for habitat restoration, monitoring and enhancement of wild salmon stocks.

Embridge Pipeline

Many respondents expressed their concern with the Alberta tar sands and plans to build a pipeline from Edmonton through British Columbia to Kitimat and potential oil tanker traffic off BC’s northern coast.

Action: I introduced a Private Member’s Bill in the House of Commons calling for a ban on oil tanker traffic in the Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound, making the moratorium on oil tanker traffic in that region legally binding.

Agriculture & Food Security

Many respondents wrote about the erosion of the Agricultural Land Reserve, labeling of genetically modified foods and the use of cosmetic pesticides.

Action: This spring, I will launch a petition campaign to ban the use of cosmetic pesticides in Canada.



BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

We must increase affordable housing stock - residents are languishing on BC Housing wait-lists for years

-Theresa
New Westminster

“The government is not providing enough to the health authorities resulting in dramatic cuts”

- Ruth
Port Moody

“Our concern is deteriorating health services and care. A wait of 5 hours in an emergency situation is unacceptable”

- Lucien & Elizabeth
Coquitlam

“Ensuring the Evergreen Line is completed on time is the #1 priority”

- Paul
Coquitlam

Protecting Healthcare

Respondents commented that there is no greater indication of problems with our healthcare system than surgical wait times. Today, five million Canadians do not have a family doctor, and one million patients are on a wait list for care - so we need to find innovative solutions that provide timely treatment.

Action: New Democrats are calling on the government to increase federal transfers, hire and train more doctors, invest in homecare, palliative care and other healthcare programs that reduce the burden on families and stop the privatization of our healthcare system.

Providing Affordable Housing

Participants were concerned about the lack of quality, affordable housing. Without a national housing strategy, there is no comprehensive plan to provide support to homeowners, no long-term support for co-ops, no renovation assistance for leaky condo owners and no permanent shelter for homeless in the Tri-Cities.

Action: New Democrats have a national housing strategy that addresses these gaps. I will continue to work in Parliament to pass affordable housing legislation.

Improving Public Transit

It's time to stop talking and start building the Evergreen Line. It's been over 15 years since this rapid transit project was proposed and since then the Tri-Cities have seen a significant increase in population with no corresponding rapid transit service.

Action: Early this spring, I met with members of the Evergreen Line Project Office to get an update on the status of the project. I will continue to press the federal and provincial governments to provide the necessary resources to build and operate the line, increase transportation options, manage growth and reduce environmental impacts.

Combating Crime

Many respondents expressed their concerns about crime in our community, especially gang violence. A balanced and comprehensive approach that addresses the reality of crime and violence in our community today needs to include preventative measures such as restorative justice programs, which are essential to building and maintaining a safe community.

Action: I recently put forward a Private Member's Bill that would close a loophole which allows child luring through new technologies and will move a motion in the House to support local restorative justice programs.

Supporting Local Police

Coquitlam has one of the lowest police to population ratios in the country. The federal government has a responsibility to provide our police with the resources and support they need to keep our communities safe. That support must also be balanced with greater transparency and federal oversight of the RCMP.

Action: I called on the Conservative government to deliver on their 2006 commitment to put 2,500 more community police and RCMP officers on Canadian streets. I also called on the government to provide municipalities with stable, long term funding in order to properly fill and maintain these positions.

Government Accountability

There is no better way to lead than by example. Some respondents questioned the level of taxation and government expenditures. Fiscal leadership is necessary; starting with a Parliament that works. On the heels of the second unjustified prorogation in two years, there were many calls to make the Prime Minister accountable to Parliament.

Action: Earlier this year, New Democrats successfully spearheaded legislation to prevent the Prime Minister from proroguing an active session of Parliament for more than seven days without the consent of a majority of Parliament.

