

upfront

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Residents pack climate change talks

Kinder Morgan pipeline concerns aired at town halls

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The North Shore's three Liberal MPs have been blitzing their constituencies talking climate change.

Close to 200 people came out to Burnaby North-Seymour MP Terry Beech's town hall meeting on climate change and the Kinder Morgan pipeline, raising concerns about everything from bees to bitumen, to tank farm explosions and oil spills.

The first half of the meeting, held on Saturday at Burnaby's Confederation Community Centre, focused on climate change, and Beech started by outlining what the federal Liberals were doing about the issue. Dozens of residents stepped up to the microphone to share their opinions.

The second half of the meeting was about the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, and many local residents raised more heated concerns.

Burnaby resident John Clarke garnered loud applause when he addressed Beech directly.

"Terry, do your part, do what you promised you would do. Stand up to your handlers in Ottawa and tell them the people here are fed up," he said.

One woman, who lived close to the Burnaby tank farm, read a list of things the company suggests people to do in the event of an emergency. The list, which included things like fleeing on foot but upwind only, and calling 911 from a landline, elicited laughter from the audience.

A local beekeeper, who said her family was displaced when the first pipeline was built decades ago, raised concerns about environmental impacts on bees.

One Simon Fraser University mathematics professor, Nilima Nigam, claimed Kinder Morgan's National Energy Board application would have not passed muster if it were an undergrad thesis and called for the company's claims to face scientific, peer-reviewed scrutiny. She also recommended the government set rules about misleading information in ad campaigns.

"We shouldn't allow the pipeline (proponents) to talk about thousands of jobs, because there aren't any," she said.

Vijay Tupper, just 11 years old, stepped up to the mic to share his views on the pipeline.

"In case of a spill, (the ground) would be covered in brown goop," he said.

One North Shore resident asked what the replacement



North Vancouver Liberal MP Jonathan Wilkinson, standing at the back of the room, discusses climate change with constituents at a town hall meeting last week at Highlands United Church in Edgemont Village. PHOTO CINDY GOODMAN

plan is for the current Trans Mountain pipeline, which is 60 years old, and complained that the meeting wasn't more informative.

To wrap up, Beech thanked the crowd for keeping decorum around an emotional issue. He also mentioned other themes he's heard through public feedback on

the pipeline, including tanker traffic and economic benefits versus risks, for example. Beech also said the government is trying to close the gap between protecting the environment and the economy, and that having clean air, soil and water is an economic driver.

Beech's town hall is part

of a series of public consultation meetings on the pipeline. Natural Resources Canada has tasked a three-person panel to collect feedback from communities along the proposed route before the final decision, which is due this December.

The ministerial panel is coming to North Vancouver district hall Aug. 19. The day's

schedule features a local government round table from 10:30 a.m. until noon and a public town hall from 2:30 until 7 p.m.

The public is welcome at all sessions and formal registration is not required. Canadians can also express their views to the panel online at mpmo.gc.ca/measures/270.