



Regional District of Mount Waddington

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File #: 430.06

The Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON
K1A 0A6 Canada

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Federal government budget 2012 submission

The Regional District of Mount Waddington (Vancouver Island North) recently received an invitation from the office of John Duncan M.P. to make a submission concerning the 2012 federal budget. As a rural-remote region of approximately 11, 500 residents and numerous communities and First Nation traditional territories, our needs of the federal government are both diverse and great in ways that go well beyond the prescribed five pages and three key recommendations. In that realisation, the Regional District respectfully provides the following submission.

Ending the centralisation and expansion of rural service management in urban centres

The communities of the Regional District of Mount Waddington (RDMW) are well aware of what typically happens when the Federal Public Service, ADMs and DMs are under pressure to cut areas of the government's operations to reduce costs:

- 1) Rural and rural-remote operations are sacrificed to protect expansionist central administrative units in Ottawa and major centres under the guise of "restructuring", "modernisation", "consolidation" or all three together.
- 2) Rural and rural-remote offices of various federal departments are wound down by attrition over a number of years to lessen the blow and community outrage when the final axe falls.
- 3) "Temporary" staff reassignments and accommodations to larger centres are made permanent and the positions in the rural areas are not re-filled.
- 4) Federal Public Service job opportunities become progressively less accessible to rural Canadians, encouraging urban out-migration for professional advancement. Professional working families have to leave and recruitment of this demographic to rural areas is rendered progressively more difficult.
- 5) Rural professional and service businesses that typically work for the Federal government are encouraged/ forced to locate to larger centres.
- 6) Rural stakeholders must travel to urban centres to discuss their own local affairs with even junior level management who have little understanding of local context.

As this Conservative government draws much support from rural Western Canada, RDMW encourages the Cabinet to re-think all advice they are given from entrenched senior public service

INCORPORATED JUNE 13, 1966

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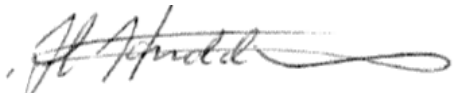
management concerning the restructuring, modernisation and consolidation of any aspect of the Federal Public Service outside of major urban centres. The recently announced operational cuts to Environment Canada have all the potential hallmarks of the above approaches by senior public service managers. It is our view that Cabinets of all political stripes are regularly and deliberately distracted from the fattened calves just down the road from Parliament Hill and outdated bureaucratic organisational models in cities like Vancouver. We urge Cabinet to clip the wings of the central bureaucracies in order to maintain and indeed restore essential rural services and functions of the federal government. It is important for government to recognise itself as a driver or *animateur* of rural socioeconomic development and to educate senior public service officials of that fact and responsibility across all ministries and agencies, not just those tasked with that specific remit. It is currently expedient to reduce or cut rural or regional services rather than the wasteful activities in the central bureaucracies – this must change.

Aside from the impact of reduced service, employment and business in rural areas, the impacts of centralisation by the Federal Public Service are suggested to be as follows:

- 1) Escalated public wage, salary and benefit packages that reflect higher residential, childcare and daily commute expenses for workers and their families with jobs in downtown urban office locations.
- 2) Expensive, consultant-driven departmental initiatives that could have been executed internally and to a higher standard by local federal staff in the past yet are now beyond the massive city bureaucracies tasked with doing the same job. The *Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area* initiative is a perfect example of this. Many of the consultants involved in such initiatives are former local area staff who were cut in previous rounds of public service consolidation.
- 3) Larger, stronger and more effective collective bargaining units that have little incentive to promote decentralisation or subsidiarity in decision-making.
- 4) Greater indirect costs as rural communities become increasingly dependent on the federal and provincial governments for reactive one-off social programs that could have been mitigated or avoided had the original services remained in place and simply been progressively modernised *in situ*.

A general policy move to cut from the centre and restore the tried and true decentralized service model for the benefit of all Canadians and the federal budget is, in our opinion, both necessary and economically progressive. The Regional District of Mount Waddington will continue to lobby on more specific matters separately through appropriate channels.

Yours sincerely,



Al Huddlestan
Chair

Pc: John Duncan, M.P.
Coastal Communities Network

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