

HOUSEHOLDER  
SPRING 2016



# H el ene Laverdi ere

MP LAURIER—SAINTE-MARIE

Critic for Foreign Affairs



@HLaverdiereNPD



Helene.Laverdiere.deputee

Please note this is the English translation of the Householder.

For the original French version, please visit my website : [www.helenelaverdiere.npd.ca](http://www.helenelaverdiere.npd.ca)

## Electoral Reform

*During the election campaign the Liberals promised it would be the last election under our current voting system. I strongly agree we should get rid of our outdated and unfair system that allows a party with less than a majority of votes to have a "false majority" in Parliament. For example, both Stephen Harper's Conservatives in 2011 and the Liberals in 2015 ended up with strong majorities in the House, even though they each won only 39% of the vote. These false majorities give governments the excuse to implement policies and take positions that often do not have the support of the majority of Canadians.*

*Electoral reform has been a key part of the NDP platform for decades. However, the current government's approach to carrying out this reform has raised a number of concerns from all opposition parties, notably with their initial proposal for an electoral reform committee. I think you will agree with me that, in order to be true to the objective of having a voting system that better reflects political diversity and the will of voters, the electoral reform committee's membership should reflect the results of the last federal election. Remember, the Liberals won 55% of the seats with less than 40% of the vote. Thankfully, the NDP convinced the government to change the format of their proposed electoral reform committee, so that it better represents the votes cast in the last election. This was a great victory for democracy and I am very proud of my colleagues for their hard work on this file.*

*New Democrats are also concerned about which voting system will be chosen. The Liberals are in favour of a preferential voting system and the Conservatives are in favour of maintaining the status quo, since these positions would give them an advantage in future elections. In contrast, the NDP is in favour of mixed-member proportional (MMP) representation. The MMP system means voters still vote to directly elect a local Member of Parliament, but adjustments are made so that the number of seats each party has in the House of Commons is proportional to the percentage of popular vote received. This system is used by democratic and politically stable countries such as Germany and New Zealand. It ensures that no party receives a false majority and that the will of voters is reflected in Parliament.*

*Together with some of my colleagues in Montreal, I will hold public consultations on electoral reform in September. I encourage you to participate in this process, as well as any other consultation process the government carries out.*

## Rights for Trans People: Federal Recognition at last!

*Transgender and non-binary-gender people have waited far too long to have the same rights and protections as everyone else. That is why the NDP introduced legislation to recognize the rights of transgender people five times since 2005. In 2011, and again in 2013, our bills were passed by the House of Commons but died on the Order Paper when the Senate chose not to act. Our proposed legislation would have ensured legal equality and protection for trans people.*

*We therefore welcomed the introduction of a government bill to modify the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act by adding protections for gender identity and the expression of gender identity. The text of the government's bill is identical to previous legislation the NDP introduced in the House of Commons. This is an important step to ensure that everyone has equal rights, and I look forward to this bill becoming law.*

## Film Screening: Guibord s'en va-t'en guerre

*On February 29, many of you braved the storm to attend the screening of Guibord s'en va-t'en guerre, followed by a discussion with the director, Philippe Falardeau. We had an enjoyable chat about how the film was made, what it's like to be an MP, and the state of our democracy. Thank you to everyone who came out! We hope to do the same thing again next year.*

[helenelaverdiere.npd.ca](http://helenelaverdiere.npd.ca)



## On The Hill

*It has been a busy Parliamentary session. In addition to bringing your local concerns to the House of Commons, I have been busy as the NDP's Foreign Affairs Critic.*

*At the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, where I am Vice-Chair, I convinced the Liberals and Conservatives to agree to a study on the United Nations Women, Peace and Security Agenda. This should be an important part of Canada's foreign policy, given the crucial role women play in building peace. The meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations results in stronger peace agreements that better incorporate gender equality and are more likely to deliver a lasting peace, compared to agreements made in the absence of women. Despite this, women are often excluded from peace processes, and the international community has failed to deliver on commitments to support women's participation in peacebuilding. Thanks to this study I suggested, however, the Canadian government is now reviewing its work on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. I am proud to have brought this issue to their attention.*

*Just as women are essential to the development of lasting peace agreements, children are at the heart of establishing resilient and healthy societies. One child in ten lives in a region affected by conflict, and yet child protection and education are still among the least-funded areas of humanitarian aid. We are currently in danger of losing a generation in Syria and in other conflict zones, where children are without hope and are at greater risk for radicalization. That is why I called on the government to support the "Education Cannot Wait" fund, launched in May during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, and to increase Canadian support for education for children in crisis situations. I invite you to read more about this issue in my blog for Huffington Post.*

*I also strongly believe in conflict prevention. As you know, for the past several years, I have called on the government to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, a global treaty that would make the transfer of small arms and light weapons much more difficult. While the Conservatives had refused to sign, the Liberals have finally agreed, after much pressure from the NDP, to accede to the Treaty. Unfortunately they are taking far too long to do so, and I continue to push them on this.*

*You may have been following the saga in Ottawa regarding the \$15 billion deal with Saudi Arabia to export Canadian-made Light Armoured Vehicles (LAVs). This deal was signed within a context of serious and ongoing human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia. We know that Saudi Arabia is waging war in Yemen, putting many civilians at risk. We know what Saudi Arabia does to its own citizens, including Raif Badawi. And we now have evidence that Saudi uses weaponry like the Canadian LAVs against its own citizens. With this in mind, I have repeatedly called on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to suspend the export permits he granted. The NDP is your voice in the House of Commons opposing the Saudi arms deal.*

*This issue also underscores the need for better oversight of the Canadian arms trade. I am extremely disappointed in the Liberals for blocking my motion to create a Parliamentary committee on arms exports, which would have given Members of Parliament the opportunity to investigate these issues on behalf of our constituents. Many of you have written to me in support of my efforts to ensure higher standards for our arms exports. Canada cannot in good conscience risk complicity in human rights abuses. I will continue to call on the government to stop exporting arms to Saudi Arabia and other human rights abusers.*

*Of course I continue to work on the case of imprisoned blogger Raif Badawi. Earlier this year I also called on the new Liberal government to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, which establishes a system of inspection in places of detention. Canada had refused to sign this Protocol since 2002. However, thanks in large part to the work of civil society groups such as Amnesty International, the government announced in April that Canada would finally sign. I am happy to have been part of the push to ensure the government finally sign this Protocol, a major step forward in our promotion of human rights.*

*Rest assured that I continue to address other long-standing international issues as well, including the terrible situation in Syria. We must do more to help these people in terms of diplomacy, humanitarian aid and welcoming them to Canada. I was honoured to welcome the first planeload of refugees at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport back in December. I celebrate the generosity and kindness of Montrealers in welcoming those less fortunate.*

*The months ahead will be very busy as well. I will continue to keep you up to date on what is happening, but please do not hesitate to tell me your concerns in the meantime!*

## Defending the Maison de Radio-Canada building in Centre-Sud

*After cuts imposed by the Conservatives, millions of citizens voted last October to breathe new life into CBC/Radio-Canada. But this winter, another announcement was made that threatened the future of our public broadcaster: the Maison Radio-Canada (MRC) building was up for sale.*

*The government owns the tower and the parking lots, purchased with taxpayer dollars, and for the site to be built an entire neighbourhood was destroyed, displacing 5,000 people. CBC/Radio-Canada is one of the largest employers in the area, in addition to being a key partner in our cultural industry and nearby businesses.*

*My colleague Pierre Nantel, MP for Longueuil–Saint-Hubert and NDP Critic for Heritage and Culture, joined me in questioning the Liberal government in the House of Commons about the purpose of the sale and transparency of the process.*

*When Minister of Canadian Heritage Mélanie Joly failed to act, even though she had the authority to do so, I stepped in with my provincial and municipal counterparts, Manon Massé (MNA for Sainte-Marie) and Valérie Plante (municipal councillor, Sainte-Marie district), to promote a petition to keep CBC/Radio-Canada in the Centre-Sud neighbourhood. More than 1,200 people signed our petition. Other stakeholders from various levels also called for CBC/Radio-Canada to stay at that location.*

*I was therefore relieved to hear that CBC/Radio-Canada will remain at its current location. Thank you to everyone who expressed their support for this central player in our community, and BRAVO to CBC/Radio-Canada for listening to its local partners. However, this Crown Corporation is still selling off its real estate assets, so I will continue to call for more transparency.*





### *In Laurier—Sainte-Marie*

*In our riding, the holiday season was a very busy season! This year, I celebrated with the Association récréative Milton-Parc, Chez Émilie, the Comité social Centre-Sud, the Centre d'aide à la famille and Au Coup de Pouce Centre-Sud. I also enjoyed the festive atmosphere at Noël dans le Parc during the candlelit walk, and the children's voices at the École Champlain and the Centre récréatif Poupart during their winter shows. I was very touched by the spirit of solidarity and by the distribution of Christmas hampers by Chemins du soleil, Jeunesse au soleil and Entraide Léo Théorêt, which each take the month of December to give back to their neighbours.*

*I was also very happy to witness the talent of the various artists in our riding, on display at the Prospero theatre, the Festival des chœurs, the Nuit des flambeaux, the MURAL festival, the Musée d'art contemporain, the Écomusée du Fier Monde and the Orchestre symphonique des jeunes de Montréal. I was also able to meet with local community media workers and journalists, including people from the student radio station CHOQ.ca and Télévision communautaire Frontenac.*

*Laurier—Sainte-Marie is also a busy place for families. With students from the Jeanne-Mance School participating in the Grand Défi Pierre Lavoie, the show put on by the Camilien-Houde Skating Club, the Je compte pour Jeanne-Mance hockey game, and the colourful parade for the Divino Espirito Santo celebration hosted by the Portuguese Mission, there is no time to be bored! It warmed my heart to see Syrian families and local families having fun together in the snow at the event hosted by the Fondation Je veux jouer.*

*There are many reasons to be proud of our diversity and the accomplishments of members of the LGBT\* community. At the Arc-en-ciel and Phénicia gatherings, as well as at the Image + Nation festival, I was inspired once again by the vitality, creativity and resilience of the people I met there.*

*I also had the opportunity to meet local businesspeople at meetings held by PME Montréal Centre-Ville and the Chambre de commerce de l'Est de Montréal, and at the awards ceremony held by Avenue du Mont-Royal. I attended the 10th annual Gala de reconnaissance en environnement et développement durable de Montréal, hosted by the Conseil régional en environnement, which rewards businesses for their environmental protection efforts. In addition, I was able to see the completed Mémoire des Aînés project by the Société écocitoyenne de Montréal. The project was designed to share the fascinating history of the Centre-Sud neighbourhood.*

*Our community is affected by many personal and public health issues, including HIV and Hepatitis C. That is why it was important to me to participate in the annual vigil for International AIDS Day, and at events held by Portail VIH-Sida, in Hepatitis Awareness Day and the new rooming house at Maison d'Hérelle.*

*What I like best about Laurier—Sainte-Marie is the sense of solidarity, seen in initiatives organized by individuals and community organizations to give back to people whose voices are often unheard. That is exactly what organizations such as Spectre de rue (which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year), the Centre de soir Denise Massé, the Maison d'Aurore, the Inter-loge (which just had a grand opening at its new location), the Clinique juridique itinérante, and McGill's 5 Days for the Homeless event do.*

### *Guy-Favreau's ECE Centre Threatened*

*On January 1, the daycare located in the Guy-Favreau complex, which provides office space to 18 federal departments, received a notice saying that the government would no longer subsidize its annual rent. This decision puts the future of the daycare at risk, even though it has been in operation for 30 years and is at full capacity. The daycare provides young parents with the option to pursue a career in the public service and to achieve work-life balance, in keeping with a federal policy currently in effect regarding workplace daycare centres. This funding cut continues the backward measures put in place by the Conservatives in 2010, when they closed down a series of affordable daycare centres for public servants across the country. After sponsoring a petition introduced by the Guy-Favreau daycare centre, I sent a letter to the President of the Treasury Board asking him to reverse this decision. I then asked a question about the Centre in the House of Commons on May 6. Since then, media interest about this issue has increased. I hope that this added pressure will help change this appalling situation. On my side, I will continue to pressure the Liberals to remind them of their commitments to work-life balance and gender equality.*

### *Full House at our Town Hall meeting on the future of the Hôtel-Dieu*

*On May 19, a large crowd attended a presentation on the Communauté Hôtel-Dieu project. Repurposing Montreal's oldest hospital facility, founded in 1742 by Jeanne Mance, provides a unique opportunity to develop a project that meets the needs of local residents: housing for everyone, green space, health care services, community services, jobs and the preservation of the historical and architectural heritage of the site. After many consultations in the community, and with input from a large number of organizations, including the Communauté Milton-Parc and then CDC Action Solidarité Grand Plateau, this innovative and inspiring project is an example of our community reclaiming a public site with great significance for our city and our neighbourhood. I hope the efforts of this coalition will come to fruition!*



## **Constituency Office**

1001, boul. Maisonneuve Est, bureau 507  
Montréal (Québec), H2L 4P9

helene.laverdiere@parl.gc.ca  
Phone: 514-522-1339