

**Hélène Laverdière, MP for Laurier – Sainte-Marie**

## **Summer 2015 Householder (English Translation)**

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### **A Busy First Term!**

We've worked hard since 2011. Despite our role as Official Opposition, the NDP still earned concrete results for Quebeckers on several issues. However, we know that on other issues our efforts to improve bills were blocked by the government.

#### **Our culture, our language, our public broadcaster**

We introduced a bill requiring all officers of Parliament to be bilingual. We reached out to MPs from other parties and succeeded in getting this legislation passed unanimously. It was a moment of great pride.

One of my great disappointments has been the Conservative government's treatment of the CBC. Many of my colleagues and I marched alongside Quebeckers to protest the cuts imposed on our public broadcaster and tabled petitions to keep up the pressure on the government. I rose in the House to call for increased, long-term, predictable funding so that the CBC can continue to promote our culture and language and preserve its celebrated costume department. It's a fight I won't give up on.

#### **Canada Post**

Ever since the Harper government announced its plans to end home mail delivery and close post offices, the NDP has fought hard against these decisions. I personally invited Lisa Raitt, the minister responsible for Canada Post, and the CEO of the Crown Corporation to visit the riding to see how community post boxes just don't work in dense, urban neighbourhoods like Centre-Sud and the Plateau. I spoke out in the House against this purely ideological proposal, which does not take into account the needs of the elderly or people with reduced mobility. We've learned that the government has since partially back-tracked and finally realized it is impossible to install community boxes in densely populated urban neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, we believe that door-to-door mail delivery must be maintained everywhere.

### **Jobs, the economy and local development**

In the spring parliamentary session, despite a majority government, we won some key battles. For example, the NDP convinced the majority government to reduce taxes on small and medium-sized businesses. We also succeeded in eliminating fees for paper bank statements and made the government backtrack on increasing taxes on cooperatives. We vigorously opposed reforms to employment insurance, but the Conservative government insists on seeing the unemployed as potential cheaters.

With my colleagues Alexandre Boulerice and François Lapointe, I publicly denounced the \$130 million that was given to Quebec and that is sitting in the coffers of the Economic Development Agency of Canada (EDC), rather than being distributed to organizations such as CDEC Centre-Sud/Plateau-Mont-Royal, which helps and supports local entrepreneurs.

### **Housing and homelessness**

During the four years of our mandate, we have repeatedly called on the government to provide better funding for affordable housing and services for the homeless. We have also demanded that agreements for social and cooperative housing be renewed. Along with my colleagues Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont–Petite-Patrie) and Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga), I held a public meeting on housing to better understand the needs of the people of Laurier–Sainte-Marie. The federal response to these needs is clearly inadequate and that's why I participated in several annual "Homeless for a Night" initiatives and various social housing demonstrations.

### **Transportation and local development**

The NDP introduced a bill for trucks to be fitted with side guards to protect cyclists and pedestrians from accidents. Along with my colleague, Transport Critic Hoang May (Brossard–La Prairie), I held a public consultation on rail security, which helped guide me in my actions on this issue. I wrote to Transport Minister Lisa Raitt to request a change in government policy on level crossings between Plateau Mont-Royal and Rosemont and to finally make crossing the two neighbourhoods safer for pedestrians and cyclists. I have also gotten involved to support citizen initiatives to improve access to the St. Lawrence shoreline, especially in Bellerive Park.

### **Connecting with citizens**

Over the past four years, I've attended meet-ups, celebrations at Lafontaine Park, and social get-togethers to chat with you. I've tried as often as possible to go out and meet with you, handing out juice to people moving on July 1 and participating in demonstrations, community activities, neighbourhood celebrations and major events like our Fête nationale and Pride. It's always a great pleasure to meet you and talk to you. If you wish to know more about the issues in this newsletter, visit my website! <http://helenelaverdiere.ndp.ca/>

## On The Hill

The spring session in Ottawa was, as usual, very busy. The Conservatives continued with their destructive policies, while my colleagues and I continued denouncing those policies that could negatively affect you, despite their attempts to stop us by imposing time allocation over 100 times since 2011.

I intervened on a range of issues which, according to what you've told me, either in letters, emails or meeting on the street, concern you. I spoke against the anti-terrorism law, Bill C-51, and asked the government to respond quickly and effectively to the earthquake in Nepal. I condemned the government's inaction on Raif Badawi, still under threat of flogging in Saudi Arabia. I also gave a statement on the occasion of Earth Day and had the opportunity to underline the work of some of the wonderful citizens' organizations that are active in Laurier-Sainte-Marie. (To see all my interventions in the House of Commons, please visit my website at <http://helenelaverdiere.ndp.ca/> )

I also continued to intervene on behalf of the CBC, notably with a press conference and many statements and questions in the House. As you may know, the NDP will reverse the cuts to the CBC and provide our public broadcaster with stable, long-term funding.

Of course, I was also active as the NDP Critic for International Development and Deputy Critic for Foreign Affairs. Among other things, I raised the issue of Canada's aid to Haiti, and I criticized the Conservatives' refusal to fund full reproductive health services, including abortion, as part of their Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Initiative. I also asked Canada to sign the major international treaty on the arms trade—something the Conservatives continue to refuse to do. Of course, I also addressed the Syria crisis and Ukraine, two urgent issues, and the military intervention in Iraq, and I continue to watch the situation in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, two often-overlooked crises.

In March, I was honored to be the first Canadian to be invited to the annual meeting of the Global Atlanticists, held in Turkey, to discuss global security and diplomacy. While in Turkey I travelled to Gaziantep, near the border with Syria, and spent time in a refugee camp speaking with Syrian refugees. This encounter made me even more committed to ensuring Canada improves its response to the devastating Syrian refugee crisis, both in terms of life-saving humanitarian support and long-term support for development, and by accepting Syrian refugees in Canada.

I hosted several important meetings on international development and cooperation issues. I was pleased in particular to host the launch of the report Canadian Perspectives on International Development, which found that 94% of Canadians believe it is important to improve economic opportunity for the world's poorest.

One of the events I am particularly proud of is when I hosted an ‘alternative’ committee meeting for the Millennium Kids, a group of young students advocating for the Millennium Development Goals. Conservative MPs had refused to invite them to a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee. One of the biggest highlights of this session was another visit of students from Montreal’s École Élan, active curious youngsters who wanted to know everything about the work of an MP. It was a real pleasure.

My biggest accomplishment this spring session was the launch of Canada Cares: the NDP’s vision for international development cooperation— a detailed account of our priorities for international development (available for download on my website). Our leader Thomas Mulcair launched this vision with an inspiring speech in front of hundreds of international development experts at the annual conference of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation—and our ideas were very well received. (Please see below for more information.)

I also held several meetings in Montreal on international issues. I was very pleased to meet with Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education. They do excellent work to educate and empower through transformative human rights education programs, in Canada and abroad. I also gave a speech at the Social Justice Connection event in Montreal, where I spoke about the importance of youth in international development to a fantastic crowd of Montrealers working on social justice issues.

### **Launch of the NDP’s Vision for International Development Cooperation**

In May I released “Canada Cares: Our Vision for International Development Cooperation.” This document, available on my website, is the culmination of several years of consultations I held with international development groups and practitioners across Canada. New Democrats understand that international development cooperation is about justice, solidarity, empowerment, and partnership—not just a matter of charity. Everyone benefits from a prosperous, sustainable and stable world where there is hope for all.

Our approach is strongly rooted in NDP values. We believe ending poverty should be at the heart of international development policy. We believe the government should facilitate and foster relationships between Canadians from all walks of life, and that Canada should build strong relationships with international partners. We believe government should first dedicate itself to meeting the real needs of people, both in Canada and in the Global South. We know that international development requires long-term thinking, and that policy should be based on the best-available evidence. Canada has a strong role to play in international efforts to end global poverty, inequality and injustice. I hope you will take the time to read Canada Cares and send me your thoughts.

## Stephen Harper's "Anti-Terrorism" Bill

Terrorism poses a real threat that we need to address in a thoughtful, effective manner. Unfortunately, with the passage of Bill C-51, Stephen Harper is not only ignoring measures that could greatly contribute to our security, but implementing provisions that threaten our freedoms and our democracy. We already have the mechanisms that allow us to identify and counter potential terrorist acts. What's missing, according to our security agencies, are the resources to enforce these mechanisms. The Harper government, supported by the Liberals, decided to pass a bill so vague that it allows the government to spy on its political enemies or civil society groups that oppose its plans or policies. Worse, the bill gives police powers to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, which has little public accountability. We do not want a return to the abuses of the 1970s.

Faced with such obstacles to our rights and freedoms, citizens from across the country have risen up to say loud and clear that they do not want to fight terrorism this way. We believe that this law should be abolished. We do not have to compromise our rights to ensure our safety. Free countries are among the safest.

New Democrats believe that terrorism is a real threat, but there can be no tradeoff between public safety and our civil liberties. Numerous experts have criticized Bill C-51 as dangerous and ineffective, including four former prime ministers, the Canadian Bar Association and a group of over 100 academics and 60 business leaders. This legislation lacks important monitoring and surveillance measures – it fails to make Canadians any safer.

## Listening to Your Concerns

Many of you have shared your views with me on key issues, whether by email, crossing paths on the street or at meet-ups. Your opinion is very important. Many of you stressed the urgent need to act to stop environmental disasters caused by oil sands development, the risky Energy East pipeline project, and seal hunting. I agree with you—our land, forests, lakes and rivers are among our most precious resources and we have a duty to properly protect them.

Another common topic during our conversations is tax evasion. An independent study found that the use of tax havens by Canadian corporations costs Canada anywhere between \$5.3 billion and \$7.8 billion a year. Yet the Conservatives are standing by their cuts to the number of Canada Revenue Agency investigators who could look into the issue. I share your frustration with this unfair and counter-productive situation. Another injustice you've expressed concern about is the spending scandal involving Liberal and Conservative senators. It will not be easy,

but it is time to abolish this archaic institution, which has no legitimacy and which for years has served only to reward Liberal and Conservative friends.

You've protested other decisions by the Conservative government as well. The more than \$36 billion in cuts to health care transfers to the provinces have enraged you. You took a visible stand against Bill C-51, imposed by the Conservatives and supported by the Liberals. I agree with you: protecting Canadians against terrorism should not be at the expense of our fundamental rights, including our right to privacy.

Please continue to share your opinions and questions. I am always happy to hear from you.

## **In Our Riding**

I participated in many events this year, and it is always with pride and honour that I watch Laurier-Sainte-Marie grow and become more beautiful. I had the opportunity to engage with many constituents and organizations and learn about several projects. Whether awarding scholarships from Avenue du Mont-Royal or at the annual general meeting of the CDEC Centre-sud/Plateau-Mont-Royal, I see the vitality and creativity of local business owners. With my colleagues Alexandre Boulerice and François Lapointe, I also held a press conference to inform citizens, media and decision makers about the need for the federal government to step up its investment to support the local community economic development corporation (CDEC), which actively contributes to our community's economic vitality.

I was also delighted to have some fun at the Village Au Pied du courant. Of course, it's a beautiful park facing the river and the Jacques-Cartier Bridge, where it's pleasant to stroll, but I was happy to support Pépinière & Co. and Les AmiEs du courant Sainte-Marie in some of their initiatives, for example with the Port of Montreal. I very much admire the immense work they accomplished to renew this project with such potential for the neighbourhood.

Other events I attended, such as the Soirée Désorientation put on by GRIS and the launch of Radio Fierté, were an opportunity to celebrate the beauty of our diversity. When the CSN's LGBT committee held a bowling party to benefit Astérisk, I had a lot of fun playing even though I was trounced! Astérisk had a difficult year financially, which encouraged its team to redouble its efforts and creativity. While the future of this organization for LGBT youth is uncertain, its reputation and relevance in our community is growing.

Leaving Ottawa to return home to Montreal always makes me feel like celebrating! That's good, because celebrations abound in Laurier-Sainte-Marie. Neighbourhood block parties, whether at Dîners St-Louis, Carrefour St-Eusèbe, Bellerive Park in

Sainte-Marie, the Sainte-Famille laneway or the Maison de l'Amitié, were opportunities to celebrate with my constituents. This year I had the opportunity to celebrate Quebec's Fête nationale at Olivier-Robert Park, the Tours Frontenac, the Comité social Centre-Sud and Pelican Park.

Laurier-Sainte-Marie is also a riding where people are busy! The cocktail reception hosted by the Fondation Yvon Deschamps for the Association sportive et communautaire du Centre-Sud, the show by the Club de patinage artistique Camillien-Houde, a visit from the Association récréative de Milton-Parc and the trophy presentation by the Défi Canot à glace sur le fleuve were opportunities to highlight the importance of sport and recreation on our health and well-being. On a sad note, we remembered cyclists who were injured or killed on our streets during the Ride of Silence.

In the riding, culture is a key issue, to creators and spectators alike. We've already been told the CBC's costume department is closing its doors, but fortunately some stakeholders who have all my support are trying to save it. And I saw this same solidarity by everyone during the Tous en coeur pour Radio-Canada concert. I was very moved by people's attachment to this institution and their determination to save it. Culture is often a vehicle for talking about other important issues, such as in the D'un oeil différent exhibition at the Écomusée du fier monde or at Cinéma Politica meetings at UQAM where I had the pleasure of talking about women in the media. Homelessness and poverty are also important issues in our community. I had the opportunity to meet with the brand new organization Soccer de rue, which forms street soccer teams for homeless youth. I also attended the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Comité logement Plateau Mont-Royal and the inauguration of La Rue des femmes' third shelter. For many organizations that work with the homeless, this year was especially challenging since federal funding against homelessness was redirected. Unfortunately, intervention, prevention, food programs and street outreach were allocated less funding than in previous years. The result is that organizations, already doing much with little, are unable to pay some of their employees and will have to cut back on services for those who need it most. I also want to recognize the efforts of Resto-Plateau, Santropol roulant and Carrefour alimentaire Centre-Sud for improving food security in the riding through their respective events.

Lastly, I would like to salute all the organizations and event organizers who have shared both their passion and their expertise with me. In the past few months I also had the opportunity to meet with Cultivons le Plateau, Coop Le Milieu, Éco-Quartier Saint-Jacques, École nationale d'administration publique, Connexion internationale, Accordailles, Maison urbaine Papineau, Habitations Jeanne-Mance, Ateliers d'éducation populaire du Plateau, Centre Lartigue, École Pierre-Dupuy, Carrefour de ressources en interculturel de Centre-Sud, Maison Plein Coeur, Maison d'Hérelle and Carrefour St-Eusèbe. Thank you for always welcoming me so warmly.

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