

SUMMER 2014 HOUSEHOLDER

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English Translation

Pour la version française: www.helenelaverdiere.npd.ca

Urban Heat Islands

Like many urban districts, Laurier - Sainte-Marie is a victim of the heat islands problem.

In urban areas, concrete, asphalt, cement and tar roofs tend to absorb large amounts of solar radiation and then release it as heat, thus creating heat islands. These areas reach higher temperatures than other surrounding spaces. The result is an increase in air pollution, plus the adverse health effects of smog. Seniors and children are most affected.

There are many solutions. To bring city temperatures down, we can avoid using materials that absorb heat and instead choose substitutes that reflect light and heat. To compensate for existing islands, we have the option of greening. Revegetation and protection of green space can counteract the heat island effect while improving citizens' living environments. Vegetation creates coolness, improves air quality by producing oxygen and capturing CO₂, and improves water quality by facilitating soil retention of rainwater and erosion control.

A number of organizations in the constituency are already working to combat heat islands and offer innovative solutions. For example, the Société de verdissement du Montréal métropolitain (SOVERDI) is working to create greenways across the city. Sentier urbain is a community mobilizer that combines greening with social/vocational integration.

My New Democrat colleagues and I believe that the federal government has a role to play in improving the quality of life of citizens in urban areas. This is a public health issue. It is why my colleague Paulina Ayala, the MP for Honoré-Mercier, has tabled a bill to address this problem. The *Act to reduce the effects of urban heat islands on the health of Canadians (C-579)* would have the government support and collaborate with communities to inventory urban heat islands and assess their health risks and to promote greening, protection of natural areas, and awareness. It is my honour to be the co-sponsor of this bill.

Volunteers and Interns sought

Are you curious to know how a constituency office operates? Want to get involved with your community in supporting your MP's work? I would be delighted to welcome volunteers and interns to my office to help my team out with various tasks.

Contact us if you have any questions or if you would like to apply:

By email: helene.laverdiere@parl.gc.ca

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Foreign Affairs and International Development

This winter, my colleagues in the Official Opposition and I continued to pressure the government to reverse its positions on several important issues in order to avoid doing further damage to our international reputation.

We celebrated some victories, the first being the announcement of the refinancing of the Youth International Internship Program (YIIP) and the International Aboriginal Youth Internships (IAYI) initiative, which had been threatened with closure since July 2013. For months, I urged the government to continue funding these programs, or else risk doing great harm to Canada's civil society organizations, young Canadians who acquire vocational experience abroad, and developing countries that benefit from cooperation programs.

I was also very pleased to see that, after weeks of pressure from myself and so many others, the government finally renewed its partnership with the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI). This association and the other provincial or regional international cooperation councils play a vital coordination role with a myriad of organizations working in development.

The NDP celebrated another victory at the House of Commons Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee, when we succeeded in incorporating all of our recommendations in the report on the crisis in Syria, which was tabled in the House of Commons with unanimous consent.

This winter, in the House, I asked the government many times about its foreign policy directions. Those questions concerned a series of important issues, including the situation in Ukraine, Boko Haram and the kidnapping of the Nigerian girls, Syrian refugees, Canadian arms trade with countries that violate human rights, and

the humanitarian crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan. I invite you to visit my website or my Facebook page to see my interventions in the House of Commons (facebook.com/Helene.Laverdiere.deputee and helenelaverdiere.npd.ca).

After weeks of requesting an invitation to attend the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Summit in Toronto, I finally received one at the last minute. While there I did several television interviews to criticize the Conservatives' incomplete strategy on this subject. It is incomplete because it excludes family planning, contraception and safe abortions. The NDP team is trying to convince the government to include full reproductive rights in its development policies.

We also commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, to remind us of the terrible cost of inaction. This sad memorial was a dramatic reminder of our promise to never allow a repetition of such an atrocity. And yet the possibility of new genocides is very real, particularly in the Central African Republic and South Sudan. I had the opportunity to discuss these situations with many organizations working in the field, as well as members of the diaspora, and I have urged the government to respond more actively to the situations of extreme violence in these two countries. I continue to exert pressure through speeches, letters and questions to ministers, exhorting the government to take immediate action.

There was another sad anniversary in April, when we remembered the 1,100 dead and 2,000 injured in the collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh. In the wake of the study by the Foreign Affairs committee, requested by the Official Opposition, we now have to strengthen the investment codes for Canadian companies operating abroad, so as to protect worker health and safety.

The winter parliamentary session was also punctuated by several special events, most notably the Sochi Olympic Games, which were a great source of concern due to the discrimination and harassment suffered by members of the LGBT community in Russia. All members of the New Democrat official opposition joined in the collective international protests in favour of LGBT rights.

As always, recent months have also given me the opportunity to participate in numerous discussions with many organizations such as UNICEF, Results Canada, the Aga Khan Foundation, World Vision, CELADA and others, on subjects as diverse as the fight against Tuberculosis, Polio and HIV-AIDS; the appropriation of African land by foreign companies; nuclear non-proliferation; and the campaign against sexual violence in conflicts. I am always very interested to participate in such discussions, which often give me the opportunity to actively support organizations that are doing vital work in the field. I regard dialogue with civil society organizations as an essential element of my work as a member of the shadow cabinet. I also attended major lectures by various international personalities, including Mr. Adama Dieng, the UN Special Adviser for the prevention of genocide, Hillary Clinton, the former U.S. Secretary of State, and His Highness the Aga Khan, while on his visit to Ottawa.

At present, I am putting pressure on the government to double its commitment to the Global Partnership for Education, which tackles problems of under-education. Today there are 250 million children who still do not know how to read or write in grade 4 of primary school, and 57 million children who simply do not have access to school. Since 2003, the Partnership has made it possible for an additional 22 million children to get an education, including 10 million girls. We would like Canada to be a leader at the Brussels conference, which is looking to raise \$3.5 billion from donor countries to support the education of 29 million children, including 23 million who live in fragile or conflict-affected countries.

Creation of an Ombudsman for the Canadian extractive sector abroad

Canada is a global leader in mining: three out of four international mining companies, or 75%, are registered here in Canada.

In recent years, I have heard numerous accounts from members of communities in Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, the Philippines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, saying they have been victims of human rights violations and are suffering the harmful environmental impacts of Canadian mining companies.

The problem is that the mechanisms put in place by the Conservatives to shed light on these sorts of charges and to find solutions are simply not working. After five years in existence, the Office of the Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor has resolved no disputes. The companies in fact withdraw from the process before the end, since it is voluntary and not binding. The CSR counsellor tendered her resignation at the end of 2013 and has yet to be replaced.

This is why I am proud to co-sponsor the bill tabled by my colleague Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-L'Île) on March 31, 2014 in the House of Commons. Bill C-584 (*Corporate Social Responsibility of Extractive Corporations Outside Canada Act*) proposes to create an ombudsman to oversee and investigate the extractive activities of Canadian corporations to ensure they are conducting themselves in exemplary fashion.

This federal legislation would establish mandatory standards for Canadian companies operating abroad, and specifically in developing countries, to ensure the observance of human and environmental rights.

Like you, we believe that in its activities abroad Canada must promote values of respect, social justice, and protection of the environment and human rights.

Practices that are not permitted in Canada should not be permitted abroad.

I encourage you to indicate your support for this bill by signing the petition on the following page: <http://petition.ndp.ca/CSR>

Also in Ottawa

Despite the victories mentioned above, this was still a difficult session, with a government that continues to refuse to listen not only to the opposition, but also to the citizens. The Conservatives always present themselves as the champions of work, including when, as was the case in June, they asked us to sit until midnight. However, many Canadians still lack quality jobs, and during these evening sessions the Conservatives missed nearly 100 of their turns to speak (and the Liberals about 20).

This session my New Democrat colleagues and I continued to defend the issues that are important to you, including Canada Post services, the CBC, and democracy. We are opposed to the increase in postal rates, to the halt to home delivery, and to the elimination of thousands of good jobs that comes with the latter. We have risen up against the cuts to the CBC and their significant impacts on Montréal employees. Finally, we opposed the shameful attempt by the Conservatives to reform the federal electoral system, an initiative that would make voting less accessible for many of the country's most vulnerable citizens.

The world of books in Laurier—Sainte-Marie

Independent bookstores, authors, publishing houses, a host of used book stores, libraries, and of course readers—Laurier—Sainte-Marie abounds in key players in the world of books. The Canadian constituency which some say has the largest number of publishers in any riding (25), its inhabitants have reason to be proud. Laurier—Sainte-Marie is a cradle of mythical places and home base to literary personalities who have become symbols of the city of Montréal and its neighbourhoods.

In the wake of public hearings on the question, it was at the corner of Berri and Maisonneuve streets that the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ) opened its doors in April 2005. A genuine space for the sharing and democratization of knowledge, this library is the most frequented cultural locale in Montréal, reaching the 25-million-visitor mark last May. All summer, the BAnQ is hosting the exhibit *L'Univers de Michel Tremblay*, on the work of another symbol of Laurier—Sainte-Marie. An internationally recognized playwright and novelist who is adored locally, Michel Tremblay has recounted and written about his neighbourhood, for example, in the novel cycle *Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal*.

Whether large, academic or independent, our bookstores have a reach that extends beyond the commercial dimension. They are disseminators of knowledge that offer an impressive diversity of works and perspectives.

In the riding, even the park is a place of literature: until July 26, you will find people reading aloud in Baldwin Park. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, at the red dais (near the corner of Marie-Anne East and Fullum streets), readers offer a captivated audience stories for children at 7 p.m., and novels inspired by life on the Plateau at 8 p.m.

So at the library, the bookstore, the park and the cottage this summer, there is plenty to read!

Bulletin Board

May 5 to August 8 saw the 38th edition of the **Programme d'économie d'eau potable** [program to save drinking water] under the theme of *L'eau c'est précieux, l'économiser c'est judicieux!* [water is precious, saving it is smart]

All summer, the **Village Éphémère** is set up at the Pied-du-Courant: boardwalk, beach with activities, welcoming plaza with street kitchen and beer garden.

Until August 20, the park at the corner of Duluth and Laval is hosting **Duluth en Arts**, a neighbourhood music festival. Fridays at 6 p.m., Saturdays at 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m., come and listen to different artists in the open air.

Winter 2014 in the constituency

Since last January, I have had the chance to visit a lot of groups and organizations in the riding, meet with a variety of enthusiastic citizens, and to take part in many activities of all sorts.

As always, I have been amazed by the talent of the artists and artisans of Laurier—Sainte-Marie. Whether visiting the Circuit-Est choreography centre or the Maison Théâtre, touring the Virée des Ateliers on Parthenais street or dropping into the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois, I have been regaled by the works of our local creative artists. I also had the opportunity to attend the very moving ceremony to

bestow the Artistes pour la paix award upon guitarist Serge Lavoie, known for his run-in with officer 728.

At the Fête des pères et mères of the Groupe de Tâche et d'Entraide du Centre-Sud, the family days of the Jean-Baptiste-Meilleur and Arc-en-ciel schools, and Valentine's Day at the Carrefour St-Eusèbe, I have met with residents on the occasion of events both fun-filled and colourful.

As part of the Sochi Olympic Games, I attended the Olympic torch relay at the Maison de Radio-Canada with students from the neighbourhood's primary schools. To denounce the intolerant rhetoric at the opening of these Games, the Conseil québécois LGBT and Amnesty International organized an action in support of the LGBT athletes, in which I eagerly participated.

Laurier—Sainte-Marie continues to impress me for the dedication and engagement of so many of its citizens. I was able to observe this engagement once again this winter in the course of my visits to various organizations, such as the Centre d'éducation et d'action des femmes; Maison du Parc, a shelter for persons with HIV-AIDS or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; Sac à dos; Société de développement social de Ville-Marie; Rendez-vous Jeanne-Mance; a very interesting meeting on food security, which is an important issue in parts of the riding; Maison d'Aurore; Comité social Centre-Sud; Resto Plateau; Action solidarité grand Plateau, and so many others.

Unfortunately many of these organizations, whose work is often essential to our collective quality of life, are having a lot of trouble making ends meet. The Conservatives' cuts, whether official or via the back door, are doing a great deal of harm. In refusing to approve valuable projects even though money is available, these cuts are jeopardizing the groups' activities. For example, Sentier urbain was walking on eggshells for months, having received no response to its grant application for a program that combines vocational integration with urban greening. Since the response from the department never came, the organization was obliged to cancel the activity.

As you know, the only way we can face these challenges is by working together. And for me, an essential part of this "working together" is cooperation among all the levels of government. So after the November elections, I was anxious to meet with the sector's newly elected municipal officials, i.e. Denis Coderre, mayor of Montréal and representative of the borough of Ville-Marie; Richard Bergeron, leader of the City of Montréal opposition and councillor for the Saint-Jacques district; and Valérie Plante, councillor for the district of Sainte-Marie. At these meetings I raised some issues of importance for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, including homelessness, access to

the river, the 375th anniversary of Montréal, rail safety, level crossings, the situation of Bellerive park, and the consequences of the cuts to Canada Post.

However, the solidarity of the citizens of Montréal and Laurier—Sainte-Marie is not confined to their immediate neighbourhood. Being deeply interested in international issues, it is always a pleasure for me to note how open to the world many of my fellow citizens are. In recent months, for example, I marched with citizens who had mobilized for Venezuela, Syria and Ukraine; I attended a lunch to mark Martin Luther King Junior Day; I took part in the celebration for the 20th anniversary of Centre Afrika, in a day of commemoration and action against mass atrocities, and in the AQOCI seminar on cooperation for gender equality; I met in Montréal with the members of the Table de concertation pour Haïti; and so on and so on.

Finally, beyond all of these organizations and political activities, there are all of you, whom I take so much pleasure in meeting on a street corner, in the grocery store or on the bus. Please don't hesitate to continue approaching me or writing to me. My work in Ottawa, as in the constituency, is supported by these sorts of exchanges.

Your Reactions

During the session, many of you wrote to me to let me know your concerns. You were outraged at the changes announced by Canada Post, the Conservative government's electoral reform, and the precarious situation of the CBC. I share your indignation.

You let me know your disappointment at the Conservative government's inability to negotiate a new health agreement with the provinces, while remaining hopeful about the renewal and expansion of our public health care system. Some of you told me you would like to see the importing and exporting of horse meat prohibited at the federal level, as it is between provinces. You also wrote asking the government to reduce its military spending, and invest instead in guaranteeing the job and financial security of persons with multiple sclerosis and their caregivers. I assure you that you have been heard, and I regard it as my duty to convey your concerns to Ottawa. Thank you for writing.