

Rick Norlock, MP  
Northumberland-Quinte West

Bill C-465: An Act respecting a National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day  
Debate at Second Reading  
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Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to address the House concerning Bill C-465, An Act respecting a National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day. This simple enactment would designate September 23<sup>rd</sup> in each and every year as a national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day.

These activities have helped form the fabric of the Canadian experience and our identity. Hunters, trappers, fishermen and anglers have made a significant contribution to the development of our nation by traversing and mapping the forest, streams, rivers, lakes, hills and mountains from coast to coast.

I echo the Speech from the Throne in stating that our values as Canadians are rooted in our history. Hunting, trapping and fishing were an integral part of the life of Canada's aboriginal peoples and first settlers. Hunting, trapping and the availability of fish defined where people settled.

Earlier settlers forged new transportation routes as they followed herds and wildlife. Famous Canadian explorers and fur traders like David Thompson, who travelled more than 90,000 kilometres by horseback, canoe, dogsled and on foot, charted Canada's untamed land and mapped more than one-sixth of the continent, paving the way for future explorers. The natural wonders that he saw and the places he visited are part of Canada's history and many have become national parks and historic sites.

Hunting, trapping and fishing were the first forms of trade and currency and formed the very backbone of Canada's financial structures. National historic sites like York Factory exist because of their importance to the history of the fur trade and the history of the interaction of aboriginal peoples and the first trading partners.

Our mind now goes back to the very beginnings of this country. Our mind goes to some of the first explorers of our country, like Cabot, who if members will recall in 1497, in a report to the Duke of Milan about the new world stated:

“The sea there is swarming with fish, which can be taken not only with a net but in baskets let down with a stone.”

Of course he was referring to the Grand Banks.

We recall just in the river behind this very place Samuel de Champlain and his exploration of the Ottawa Valley and many parts of Canada back in the 1600s.

Through hunting, trapping and fishing Canadian communities were forged, citizens were brought together in trading in communities and in spirit, famous Canadians, such as the first trading expansionist, Governor Frontenac, who extended French trading posts all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Early settlers navigated the swift, tumultuous Canadian rivers in search of adventure and food.

A national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day would celebrate the continuity between heritage and contemporary activities. It would serve as a link between our ancestors and future generations.

A national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day would also be an occasion for Canadian hunters, trappers and anglers to raise awareness about the history of our great country and the role that hunting, trapping and fishing have played in the exploration and settlement of this country. It is an opportunity to pass on these national traditions.

My grandfather, Narcisse Vien, was a trapper. My father worked in the bush of northern Ontario. Hunting and trapping as well as fishing is not only important to families like mine but to countless millions of Canadians from the very beginning, as I have mentioned, of this country.

The day would also represent an opportunity to highlight the role of Canada's aboriginal and Métis people in the settling of this country. For many of Canada's aboriginal and Métis peoples, hunting, trapping and fishing continue to this very day to provide a source of income, food and a tangible link to their history and the basis of many traditions.

Not only are hunting, trapping and fishing historically significant for Canada, but they contribute to the economy of this country today.

Canada has a strong reputation as a premier destination for outdoor sporting enthusiasts. These industries build on the strength of Canada's economy and sustain jobs. From campsites to outfitters, from travel guides to restaurants, the hunting, trapping and fishing industry attracts visitors to Canada.

The tremendous importance of these industries cannot be overstated, and in the interests of brevity, because we only have a few minutes, I would just like to relate to the House the tremendous importance of these activities on the gross domestic product of many areas of Canada, and I will just name a few: In British Columbia, 2003, the gross domestic product for angling was some \$711 million; the GDP in British Columbia, \$116 million for hunting; in Alberta, over \$102 million of expenditures for hunting activities, and many more millions of dollars in other trapping and hunting related activities. In Ontario, the province in which I live, hunting alone represents over \$1.5 billion in economic activity.

The fur trade in Canada contributes over \$800 million to the Canadian gross domestic product, and the fur trade in Canada is composed of over 60,000 trappers, including 25,000 aboriginals, with 5,000 representing fur farmers, manufacturers, dressers, retailers and others. We cannot forget the people in the Atlantic who rely on the sealing industry.

Canadians actively participate in hunting, trapping and fishing each year. Some 3.2 million Canadians participate in recreational fishing, and spend some \$7.5 billion on this sport. Nationally, about one in every ten Canadian adults are active anglers. Recreational fishing is a legitimate, social and economic use of fish resources, and is integrated into the management plans that conserve fish stocks. Managing and sustaining recreational fisheries allows Canadians to enjoy Canada's national resources.

Hunting, trapping and fishing and tourism generated by these activities are vital to sustaining some of our smallest communities and creating jobs for Canadians in very remote areas of this country. Take for example that of more than \$1.6 billion spent on recreational fishing in 2005, three-quarters of these expenditures were spent on food, lodging and transportation. This is an investment in Canada's economy and in Canadian communities in jobs.

From the Great Lakes to the mountains on Canada's west coast and the farthest reaches of the north, these pursuits continue to draw people together and entice tourists to visit Canada. Hunting, trapping and fishing are particularly important for Canada's northern communities, on both a cultural and economic level. Canadians living in these regions rely on hunting, trapping and fishing for their very survival. Hunting, trapping and fishing also fuels their economies and helps them attract more than 400,000 visitors each year as Canada's north has some of Canada's best hunting and sport fishing opportunities.

Canada's natural resources are defining characteristics of our country and a sense of pride for many Canadians. Encouraging Canadians to pursue these outdoor activities provides opportunities for many Canadians to enjoy our natural resources in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Because of their vested interest in our natural resources, hunters, anglers and trappers have made significant contributions to the understanding of Canada's vast eco-system. For example, Canadian anglers support national parks by taking part in surveys, reporting tagged fish and participating in public consultation. They have also been key advocates and participants in conservation efforts and the management of fish and wildlife.

Hunters, trappers and anglers have funded and participated in research projects to help save wetlands, reintroduce wildlife and restock lakes. They have improved safety conditions and encouraged younger generations to participate in the traditions of hunting and fishing as well as trapping.

Canada's hunters, trappers and fishermen are highly regulated and educational programs are in place to ensure that these are safe recreational activities. In many instances, licensing fees contribute to the monitoring and protection of wildlife. I must say that I belong to several of those organizations, such as Ducks Unlimited for example.

I could not speak today without mentioning Ducks Unlimited, who have been conserving wetlands in Canada since 1938. They have secured 6 million acres of habitat through land purchases, management

agreements and conservation elements. They have positively influenced 47 million acres of habitat through retention and restoration measures. They have completed 8,400 habitat projects, representing 26,000 different project segments. That is just one organization of many, not including the one I belong to, which is the Quinte Elk Restoration Committee.

I recognize that this is not the first time that this topic has been raised. I would like to assure the House that Bill C-465 does not impinge upon provincial or territorial jurisdiction for the regulation of hunting, trapping and fishing. The provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario have existing legislation and Saskatchewan's act is in the process.

These activities recognize the importance of hunting, fishing and trapping and this bill does not contradict that authority. Bill C-465 simply calls for the designation of a special day to commemorate our national history and heritage, a day to reflect on how our nation was formed and the continuing importance of these traditional activities.

The importance of hunting, fishing and trapping on the founding of the United States of America was recognized on September 26 and that date was designated by a proclamation as a national hunting and fishing heritage day. This proclamation highlighted the contributions of hunting and fishing to sound game management, the system of ethical, science-based game laws and national heritage. Canadians deserve a similar recognition of hunting, trapping and fishing, the role they played in building our nation and the role they continue to play in our national environment.

The formal designation of September 23 of each year as an official national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day would raise awareness among Canadians about the important contribution that Canada's hunters, trappers and anglers have made to the settlement of Canada. The designation of this day will provide Canadians with an annual opportunity to highlight Canada's heritage and the traditions of hunting, trapping and fishing.

A national day would build on the independent spirit of those Canadians who engage in active recreation on Canada's land and waterways and encourage Canadians to learn about Canada's history and travel the trails and the waterways of those who came before us. I again declare that I support the designation of this day as a federal commemoration of an important aspect of national history and heritage. It may be emotional for some people. It certainly is for this member, whose family hunts and fishes just up the way.

I ask all members of the House to support this bill. It is simple, but it does recognize the tremendous importance that these activities have on every Canadian. They have formed a vital part of why Canada is the country it is today, not only to this day but since the very founding of this country.