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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 with great pleasure that I am able to address the House today concerning Bill C-465, which has been put forward by my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte West.

I would like to take this time to highlight the importance that these activities have on our national economy, the important role that hunters, trappers and anglers play in conservation, and to highlight the support this bill has received.

As co-chair of the parliamentary outdoors caucus, I was honoured to second this bill. It is a non-partisan organization with over 100 MPs and senators as members, and its purpose is to protect our traditional heritage activities.

Hunting, trapping and fishing are Canadian heritage traditions which provide people of all ages and abilities the unique opportunity to spend quality time outdoors with family and friends in wild places in every region and riding of this country.

A major part of these outdoor heritage activities is the direct connection to natural resource conservation of our fish and wildlife. A love and respect for nature learned through firsthand experience in fishing, hunting or trapping inspires people to dedicate their time, effort and money to the conservation and preservation of fish and wildlife, and that is a key point that I would like to emphasize.

Anglers, trappers and hunters collectively do more for environmental conservation than all other groups combined. They do so without fanfare and often without any public recognition but with the dedication that has defined the outdoor heritage community for over 100 years. The hand that holds the fishing rod or the bird gun also holds the shovel at a stream side improvement and the chain saw at a wildlife habitat management project.

Canadian anglers annually donate over one million volunteer days to aquatic improvement projects. Hunters also donate millions of hours and dollars each year to efforts which benefit dozens of wildlife species far beyond the few which are actually hunted.

Many of my colleagues may be surprised to learn that the very concept of parks and protected areas first conceived in North America over a century ago, exist today across Canada and around the world due in large part to the advocacy efforts of people who hunt and fish. Our heritage of fishing, hunting and trapping includes a proud history of respect for wild creatures and wild places which continues to translate into positive conservation action in all areas of Canada.

People who participate in these activities are also at the forefront of improved hunter safety training and safe firearm handling and proficiency. Anglers can be found advocating for and teaching water safety and boat handling training programs. Trappers teach humane trapping methods and proper conservation of fur-bearing species as a heritage from Canada's original founding industry.

Current statistics clearly show that people who hunt, fish and trap are law-abiding members of society who are safe and who put something back on behalf of our outdoor heritage. In contrast to the negative image of these activities promoted by some for their own reasons, the facts are clear and the safety record commendable.

Over eight million Canadians of all ages fish and millions more hunt, supporting an annual economy in this country of over \$10 billion. The largest retail outlets are located in urban areas.

Over 40,000 jobs are supported by these activities in all regions of Canada. According to government statistics, more people over the age of 15 fish than play golf and hockey combined. The voting strength of Canadian anglers is almost 50% greater than seniors age 65 and over. Canadians annually spend as much to go fishing as they do to buy beer. The impact of fishing and hunting on tourism and related economies in rural areas is dramatic. Clearly, our outdoor heritage activities are enjoyed by Canadians and visitors to Canada alike, from coast to coast.

Support for the bill has been overwhelming. Members from the Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic Parties have jointly seconded this non-partisan bill that applies to so many of our constituents. The bill also enjoys wide support from non-government organizations, businesses and individuals across Canada.

I would like to take a moment to thank a few of these groups that have been extremely helpful and generous with their support. The Alberta Fish and Game Club Association, British Columbia Wildlife Federation, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Friends of Fur, Canadian Outdoors Network, Canadian Sport Fishing Industry Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Fur Institute of Canada, Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation, La Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Outdoor Caucus Association of Canada, Prince Edward Island Wildlife Federation, Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation, Robert Sopuck, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Shimano Canada Limited and Wildlife Habitat Canada.

As mentioned previously, hunting, fishing and trapping played an essential role in the early development of our nation. Today, people fish, hunt and trap for some very personal and profound reasons that connect us to our history, to our magnificent outdoors and to one another. Teaching a child to fish is one of life's great moments. These activities remain as economical and relevant today as ever. Some suggest that these activities are more relevant than in the past as our modern, urban lifestyles tend to insulate us from the natural world. Fishing, hunting and trapping connect us to the wild places. They always have.

We owe our thanks to the ongoing efforts of hunters, trappers and anglers and what they continue to accomplish for all of us, and it is due to these people that the conservation of land, water, forests and the species living there have been so successful in Canada. These individuals recognize the natural balance that must be maintained through science-based sustainable use of fish and wildlife.

It is my great privilege to speak in support of Bill C-465, a bill which represents the interests of so many Canadians in all regions of our nation. I encourage every member of the House to show their support for the bill in recognition of our outdoor heritage activities and the millions of our fellow citizens who actively participate and enjoy them.

I would like to thank the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for bringing forth Bill C-465.

I myself have enjoyed hunting and fishing since I was very young. Unless we have experienced these outdoor heritage activities, we do not know how wonderful and valuable they are. There is no substitute for getting out into our great Canadian wilderness. Our whole attitude to the world changes through these activities. Respect for life and nature grows immensely when we participate in hunting and fishing.

In conclusion, I again want to emphasize the wonderful activities that we have on our doorsteps, and I encourage more Canadians to participate in them and learn more about them. It can really enrich their lives, and I hope that this special day every year will remind us of the need to do that.