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Location of Federal Government's Northern Development Agency Jobs

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak today about the federal government's announcement of a Northern Development Agency. It was supposed to consolidate existing northern development activities into one. The federal government has also stated this agency will have funding of \$10 million per year, with the possibility of millions more for other strategic investments in northern economic development. I would like to know exactly what our government is doing to get this office located in the Northwest Territories.

We have the advantage of being centrally located between our neighbours, Yukon and Nunavut. We are poised to be the economic engine of this country well into the next decade with the possible construction of the Mackenzie Gas Project and the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

I'm very thankful that the federal government is looking positively at northern Canada and is going to be making substantive investment in our three northern territories. However, I believe that our government should be taking more action to address the other hundreds of jobs located in Ottawa and Gatineau, Quebec, that pertain to northern development.

I take issue with the latest job postings looking for five senior policy advisors and five senior analyst positions all located in Gatineau, Quebec. Directly from one of the postings is, "the organization will lead the development and implementation of an integrated Northern Strategy that will focus on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and approving governance so that Northerners have greater control over their destinies." These 10 positions are, again, located in Gatineau, Quebec. Not Iqaluit, not Whitehorse, and not Yellowknife.

This is just an example of jobs that should be located north of 60. Almost all of the northern oil and gas activity is located in the Northwest Territories. So why is it that 29 positions dealing with northern oil and gas are again located in Gatineau, Quebec? Why don't we hear this government making some noise about any of these positions?

Just with the 39 positions I've spoken about today, with an average family size of 2.5 and a transfer payment of \$22,000 per person, that would mean an additional \$22 million in transfer payments and an additional \$4 million injected into the local economy.

It's high time we sit down with the federal government and discuss the jobs pertaining to northern development that are located in Ottawa and Gatineau, and get them where they belong.