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Fortieth Anniversary of Laurendeau-Dunton Report— State of Bilingualism

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

THE SENATE

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FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF LAURENDEAU-DUNTON REPORT— STATE OF BILINGUALISM

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):

Honourable senators, yesterday Radio-Canada released the results of a survey it commissioned to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Laurendeau-Dunton Royal Commission, which led to the adoption of the Official Languages Act in 1969. The survey explores how Canadians see bilingualism and how important it is to them.

The survey results are very interesting because they support the findings of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' 2006 study: most Canadians support bilingualism and linguistic duality.

[*English*]

Eight Canadians out of 10 support the idea that Canada is a bilingual country, and an overwhelming majority of Canadians also believe that the prime minister should be

able to speak both English and French. As the Commissioner of Official Languages said in reaction to the poll, 'it is clear that Canadians have definite expectations of the language abilities of their elected officials.' Interestingly, students are some of the biggest supporters of Canada's two official languages, thereby reinforcing the fact that there is a continued interest in learning Canada's two official languages.

[*Translation*]

However, the poll shows that even though Canadians are interested in learning our two official languages, they still do not have enough opportunities to do so. Continued promotion of second language programs is needed so that Canadians who want to can learn the country's other official language.

Honourable senators, our federal and provincial governments must continue encouraging the creation and provision of second language learning programs and continue promoting linguistic duality in order to enhance the vitality of our official language minority communities. By making it easier for people to access these programs and by encouraging cultural exchanges between different regions, we will build a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the 21st century.