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INTERNATIONAL FRANCOPHONIE DAY

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

THE SENATE

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INTERNATIONAL FRANCOPHONIE DAY

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, like my colleague from New Brunswick, I speak today in recognition of International Francophonie Day. This day was created in 1988 by member countries of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, as a means for these countries to celebrate their common bond — the French language.

Although Francophonie Day is March 20, all manner of activities are organized across Canada for the duration of Francophonie Week. From March 9 to 25, some 9 million Canadian francophones and francophiles are gathering across the country to celebrate the French language and culture. In Alberta, for example — whether in Calgary, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, Legal, Edmonton or Bonnyville — the Franco-Albertan community will celebrate its pride, history, language, vitality and contribution to Albertan society by organizing various activities.

In recent years, the Speaker of Alberta's Legislative Assembly, the Hon. Ken Kowalski, has taken part in the festivities by organizing a ceremony to recognize the contribution of francophones to Alberta's history and society. Mr. Kowalski uses these occasions to throw out challenges to the Franco-Albertan community, such as building a monument or writing a book about the contribution of francophones to Alberta politics. Our community has always enthusiastically taken up these challenges.

Honourable senators, French is an official language in 33 countries on five continents and it is one of the official languages of a dozen international organizations. It is a language spoken by almost 250 million people worldwide.

Honourable senators, International Francophonie Day is an excellent opportunity to show the solidarity, dynamism and vitality of the Canadian Francophonie and to celebrate one of the official languages of our country and one of the world's great international languages.
