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CANADIAN SUMMIT OF FRANCOPHONE AND ACADIAN COMMUNITIES

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN SUMMIT OF FRANCOPHONE AND ACADIAN COMMUNITIES

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):
Honourable senators, I rise today to join my voice to that of my colleague, Senator Chaput, in order to draw attention to the Summit of Francophone and Acadian Communities, which took place on June 1, 2 and 3, 2007, in Ottawa. Like many of you, I attended this major gathering of Canada's Francophonie to discuss and reflect on our future as a community.

Organized by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes, this event gave us an opportunity to reflect on our future and on issues such as governance, demographics, services, political influence and the economic development of our communities.

As the Commissioner of Official Languages said in his speech on June 2:

Feeling all the positive energy emanating from this room, from the Summit, is simply amazing. Everyone here is moving in the same direction: toward the future.

In fact, all weekend long, the representatives of this country's francophone and Acadian communities looked to their future and worked to develop a vision and a long-term plan. In addition to attending workshops, we had the honour of listening to several eminent speakers who talked about their impressions of our communities. What struck me about the community representatives, the participants and the guest speakers alike was their positive energy, their commitment and their optimism about the future.

Despite the challenges facing them, francophone and Acadian communities are not afraid of the future and want to continue promoting our language, our culture and our many contributions to Canadian society. As Antonine Maillet so aptly put it, the French language is a Stradivarius, and if we are in possession of a Stradivarius, we have to keep it, take good care of it and protect it in order to pass it on to our children and grandchildren.

Honourable senators, the signing of the Summit declaration by all the community representatives confirms what Mr. Fraser said in his speech, "Rumours of the impending death of Canada's Francophonie have been greatly exaggerated".

Honourable senators, I am certain that you join with me in congratulating the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes, the organizing committee and all the participants and volunteers on a very successful summit.
