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Renewal of Action Plan

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, April 1, 2008

THE SENATE**Tuesday, April 1, 2008***[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES****RENEWAL OF ACTION PLAN**

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, five years ago, the Honourable Stéphane Dion presented the Action Plan for Official Languages. It was rare to see ministers, senior government officials and leaders of francophone and anglophone minority communities working together to produce a plan that would give a boost to the development of these communities across Canada, an innovative plan that would guarantee the federal government's support in areas such as education, health, justice and immigration.

Since the Conservatives took power, their commitment to the Action Plan has been steadily waning. When the government tabled the budget in February, it did not allocate money to renew the Action Plan, a sign that the government does not take the official languages file seriously.

• (1415)

The 2003-08 Action Plan for Official Languages expired today. Official language minority communities are on pins and needles, left hanging with projects that are essential to their survival.

The government must fix this and make a clear, concrete commitment to bilingualism and linguistic duality in Canada. The budget would have been the perfect opportunity to take such action. Unfortunately, the budget was not specific, and we are left waiting for a new Action Plan that has yet to be announced.

For a long time, the Government of Canada was seen by the communities as a leader in supporting language rights, but this situation shows a change in direction, and not for the good.

We are urging the government to take action and reassure the communities by delivering a clear message that reaffirms the important place of bilingualism and linguistic duality in the Canadian identity. This message must be accompanied by adequate funding that meets the needs of the communities in a coherent and visionary framework for action.
