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Question by

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

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THE SENATE

Thursday, February 5, 2009

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

BUDGET 2009

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. There is not one word about francophones in her government's 2009 budget.

The Commissioner of Official Languages finds it regrettable that the government chose not to reaffirm its commitment to and support for minority language communities in the 2009 budget. How can francophones believe that the \$1.1 million announced in the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality in June 2008 will really be included in the budget when it was not even mentioned?

[*English*]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government and Minister of State (Seniors)): Honourable senators, I believe it is a given that this government's commitment and all governments' commitment to language duality and support of official languages is a given. I wish to assure Senator Tardif and all honourable senators that there is no ambiguity about the government's support of the official languages community and linguistic policy.

As promised in Budget 2008, as my colleague reminded me, last June our government presented the Roadmap for Linguistic Duality in Canada from the year 2008 to 2013. We are moving forward with the implementation of this road map. We have an excellent new minister in the person of James Moore, who I can assure honourable senators is committed to this policy. We promised we would come up with a new government strategy and that is exactly what we did by presenting the road map, which for

the first time, to my knowledge, includes historic funding of \$1.1 billion over the next five years. This funding represents an unprecedented commitment of the government to our official languages communities. The road map includes, not only increased spending in many sectors targeted by the action plan of the former Liberal government, but also new investments in key sectors such as \$12.5 million for a youth fund and \$14 million for a cultural fund.

• (1510)

Honourable senators, this is like an answer I gave yesterday on another matter. We committed funds as part of Budget 2008. The fact that there has been another budget in 2009 does not mean it cancels out commitments made in 2008. We made the commitments and we will live by them. If the honourable senator has not already met the minister, when she does, she will find that he is extremely committed to this file.

[*Translation*]

Senator Tardif: The communities have been waiting for almost a year. Once again, announcements are made but the money does not materialize. I would like the minister to reassure me and tell me today just when the monies will be distributed.

[*English*]

Senator LeBreton: I do not know what part of "yes" the honourable senator has difficulty accepting. I said that there is no ambiguity. The money is there and the minister is committed to it.

The road map has allocated an unprecedented amount of money to this issue, more than any government in the history of the country. As I rise to give assurance of the government's commitment, I am sorry the honourable senator does not accept my word.