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The Honourable Claudette Tardif, Ph.D., Senator (Alberta)

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CBC/Radio-Canada still waiting despite Opposition pressure

OTTAWA – The future of the CBC/Radio-Canada still hangs in the balance because of government inaction; even several weeks after 800 jobs were cut nation-wide.

"The government has known about the financial problems facing the CBC/Radio-Canada for a long time. It ignored the recommendations of the various parliamentary committees that suggested providing stable funding to the CBC/Radio-Canada. Despite these efforts, the government did nothing to prevent the layoffs or the cancellation of regional programming," declared the Honourable Claudette Tardif on Thursday, June 4, 2009 in the Senate.

The francophone Senator from Alberta sounded the alarm last week concerning minority-language communities who are especially affected by this financial insecurity. "It is vital to support a local CBC/Radio-Canada presence, especially in French, because the network is already working on a shoestring," she underscored, pointing out that the CBC/Radio-Canada budget is divided on a one-third/two-thirds basis between the French-language and English-language networks.

She described the sorry state of affairs: "In the West, on the francophone side of things, nine full-time positions and four part-time positions will vanish; in Manitoba, five employees and one manager will be let go; in Saskatchewan, one person will be dismissed; in Alberta, two people will be laid off, one full time position and one part-time position and in British Columbia, four people will lose their jobs," stated the Honourable Claudette Tardif. Local noon-time programming has been cancelled across the board, and Saturday programming will be consolidated for the entire Western region."

Not only has the government refused to provide the CBC-Société Radio-Canada with bridge financing, it is now considering selling the Crown corporation to reduce the federal deficit. The sale of other Crown corporations, like Via Rail and the National Arts Centre, are also on the table. All of these Crown corporations have responsibilities and obligations under the Official Languages Act. Senator Claudette Tardif also asked the government what mechanisms would be put in place to ensure that these companies comply with their obligations under the Official Languages Act if these sales were to proceed.

Members of the Opposition continue to remind the government that it must take fast action to protect, not to diminish, the rights of language minorities.