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TRIBUTES

The Late Jean-Robert Gauthier, C.M.

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, April 15, 2010

THE SENATE

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[Translation]

TRIBUTES

THE LATE JEAN-ROBERT GAUTHIER, C.M.

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, it is an honour and a privilege to pay tribute to our former colleague, the Honourable Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier, for whom I had great admiration and respect.

I can say unequivocally that francophone communities always found a treasured ally in Jean-Robert Gauthier. As the Honourable Marie Poulin said in December, the Honourable Jean-Robert Gauthier truly did embody the meaning of the expression “having the courage of his convictions.”

Elected in 1972 and re-elected for six additional terms in the House of Commons, he served the citizens of his riding, Ottawa East, later Ottawa-Vanier, as well as all Canadians, with passion and dedication.

He held a number of portfolios: Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs; Official Opposition House Leader; Liberal Party House Leader; Whip; and party critic for the public service, Canada Post Corporation, the Treasury Board, and most importantly, the cause that he cared most strongly about, official languages.

During his decade of loyal service in the Senate, from 1994 to 2004, the Honourable Jean-Robert Gauthier sat on nine senatorial committees, and served as Vice-Chair and Chair

of the Standing Committee on Privileges, Standing Rules and Orders.

From 1972 to 2004, Jean-Robert Gauthier dedicated himself to the work of Parliament; the official count was 31 years, 11 months and 24 days. However, he was unofficially involved in politics long before he was elected and long after he retired from the Senate.

Thanks to his Bill S-3, since 2005 the Official Languages Act has required that federal institutions take positive measures to support the development of official language communities and to foster the full recognition and use of both English and French nationwide.

A strong advocate for Canada’s francophones, his work helped foster the development of the French fact across Canada, as well as linguistic duality within Canadian society. For the past seven years, Senator Gauthier ran the Jean-Robert Gauthier Foundation’s annual literary essay competition. I had the privilege of sitting on the panel as honorary president for three years.

This competition encourages francophone youth from across the country to reflect on their shared values and interests.

• (1410)

This initiative is just one of many examples of the ongoing support provided by Jean-Robert Gauthier to the younger generations, students and francophones throughout Canada. I know that the Franco-Albertan community joins me in extending sincere condolences to his wife, Monique, his children and grandchildren.