



# News Release

L'honorable Claudette Tardif, Ph.D., sénatrice

## For immediate release

### **Senator Tardif sponsors bill requiring that Supreme Court Judges understand both Official Languages**

OTTAWA (April 20, 2010) – Senator Claudette Tardif today stood in the Senate in support of Bill C-232, an Act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages), which would introduce a new requirement for Supreme Court of Canada appointees to understand English and French without the assistance of an interpreter.

“Supreme Court Justices should possess the linguistic ability to seize the subtleties that are crucial in forming an opinion on legal arguments presented before the Court, and yet can sometimes be lost in the process of simultaneous interpretation,” said Senator Tardif.

“The bill would not only guarantee Canadians the right to be heard in the language of their choice before the highest court, but also the right to be understood,” she continued. “Bilingualism and equality are at the core of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

Michel Doucet, a lawyer who has appeared before the Supreme Court, testified before the Official Languages Committee of the House of Commons about his own personal experience. He said, “[W]hen you lose a case in a five to four decision, as happened to me at one point, and you’ve pleaded that case in French, [...] you wonder about what they understood. I listened to the English interpretation of my argument, and I understood none of it.”

Every federal court across the country already complies with the *Official Languages Act*, and ensures that cases may be heard and understood in the official language of choice.

“Excellence will not be compromised,” said Senator Tardif. “This bill will ensure that Canadians, whether they are English or French-speaking, will know that when they take a case to the highest court in the land, they are able to truly state their case, be understood, and receive the best decision on the merits of the issue.”



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