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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, March 13, 2012

THE SENATE

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on Tuesday, March 20, francophones in over 50 countries where French is spoken will celebrate International Day of La Francophonie.

It is interesting to note that the official celebration of la Francophonie will be held in Trafalgar Square in London, where a series of concerts featuring francophone artists will be held. The shows will be part of the festivities surrounding the Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place in London this summer. Michaëlle Jean, Canada's former Governor General, will attend the celebration in her capacity as Grand Témoin de la Francophonie for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

The Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, our own national celebration of French language and culture, will take place from March 9 to 25. This year's theme is "Understanding builds a better future." Across Canada, various events including flag-raising ceremonies, shows, concerts and educational activities will attract many francophones and francophiles who care about promoting French-language culture.

In my province of Alberta, 23 communities raised the Franco-Albertan flag on March 2 to kick off the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. The flag's design was selected for its power to bring people together. Edmonton's mayor, Stephen Mandell, took the opportunity to salute the francophone community's

significant efforts to preserve its history and language and the integrity of French-Canadian culture across the country. He said that the community is doing an outstanding job.

• (1410)

Honourable senators, Canada's Francophonie represents an invaluable quality and asset that distinguish us around the world. We must always focus on strengthening and enhancing relationships between our francophone communities in order to promote French in the business world, across the digital universe and in our international exchanges.

According to the Secretary General of La Francophonie, Abdou Diouf, francophones in Canada, who are surrounded by a nearly entirely anglophone majority, provide the heartbeat of the global Francophonie. The unique situation of Canada's francophones and their unwavering determination to defend the French language are extremely motivational to francophones around the globe.

I hope our elected officials never stop recognizing their responsibilities towards francophone communities to assert and demonstrate their leadership, while developing and implementing policies that show respect for our language rights.

I wish to pay tribute to everyone who works on promoting and enhancing la Francophonie, while keeping the French language alive and flourishing. We must demonstrate our attachment to la Francophonie by celebrating its wealth and diversity.