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TRIBUTES

The Honourable Joyce Fairbairn, P.C.

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

THE SENATE

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THE HONOURABLE JOYCE FAIRBAIRN, P.C.

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):
Honourable senators, I rise to add my voice to those paying tribute to the Honourable Joyce Fairbairn today.

I wish to associate myself with the comments made by my colleagues in this chamber about Senator Fairbairn's exemplary contributions to Canadian public life. Joyce Fairbairn is a political trailblazer, a dedicated community activist and a proud Albertan. She represented her province with distinction in the Senate of Canada for 28 years.

When I became Deputy Leader of the Opposition in 2007, I looked to Senator Fairbairn for inspiration and courage. She was the first to break the mould in this place by becoming the first woman Leader of the Government in the Senate in 1993. In fact, when I came into this place in 2005, Senator Fairbairn acted as my sponsor. I quickly saw that I was in the company of someone special. In the Senate chamber, in committee hearings, in caucus and at public events, the respect and admiration that others held for her was clear regardless of their political stripe. Senator Fairbairn was a leader in the truest sense of the word.

Back home in Alberta, and in fact across the country, Senator Fairbairn has had an impact on her community just as remarkable as her political accomplishments in Ottawa. Lethbridge Mayor Rajko Dodic recently publicly thanked Senator Fairbairn, saying:

During her distinguished career, Senator Fairbairn earned the admiration and affection of her local community.... As a regional Senate representative, Senator Fairbairn has been a tireless advocate for southern Alberta and Lethbridge in particular. Through her decades of service, she has remained down to earth, accessible and easily able to relate to people from all walks of life. This helps explain why many of us in southern Alberta know her simply as Senator Joyce.

Senator Fairbairn is the kind of individual who truly makes this great place function exactly as it was intended to function — a place where substantive, meaningful examination of issues can take place, especially for voices that go unheard in other arenas.

Perhaps Senator Fairbairn said it best herself:

That is one of the good things about the Senate. If you want to invest the time and you have the energy, you can pick out issues that have fallen through the cracks or have been completely ignored.... Literacy became my cause then, and now, and forever.

I will miss Senator Fairbairn's presence in this building. In our Alberta caucus meetings, in our national caucus, in the Senate chamber, her absence is felt.

Joyce, Canadian politics is better for having had you here on the Hill. In all the ways that you have served our country for half a century, I join my colleagues in saying, "Thank you."