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THE LATE HONOURABLE
RALPH PHILLIP KLEIN, O.C., A.O.E.

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

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Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Honourable Ralph Klein, twelfth Premier of Alberta and thirty-second Mayor of Calgary. Like millions of Albertans back home, I was saddened to learn of his passing on March 29.

Premier Klein was a unique and gifted political force who acted with straightforwardness, passion and never a trace of pretence. His life of service to Alberta was marked by many notable events, such as the 1988 Calgary Olympics, over which he presided as mayor; his success in balancing our province's books; and perhaps most memorably, the natural resources boom and accompanying era of growth and opportunity in the province.

I will remember Premier Klein most for his role in securing the future of the Faculté Saint-Jean — now called the Campus Saint-Jean — the faculty of which I was the dean at the University of Alberta from 1995 to 2003.

When I became dean, the Faculté was at a crossroads. In many ways, its future was in question. In particular, the student residence was a century-old building badly in need of substantial work. No one had invested in the needed maintenance, and by the time I took over, the state of the building was so bad, a number of people were ready to simply tear it down. This would have been devastating, not only for the Faculté, but also for the francophone community, which had a long and deep attachment to the building that went far beyond its current use as a student residence.

I asked for a window of three years to see what I could accomplish, and the largest, most overwhelming task was the challenge of raising all the money that would be required. I had never done fundraising of that magnitude in my life. To give you an idea of what we found ourselves up against, early on I met with someone I will call a very senior civil servant in the Alberta government. He told me flat out that he would never put money

into bricks and mortar for that building, for that institution, that is, for the French-speaking faculty within the university.

That made it pretty clear I was not going to get much help from civil servants, so I switched to political avenues. There was a very big Progressive Conservative event coming up, and I knew that Premier Klein would be there. I was not very political in those days, but I went. There were over 1,000 people there; I did not even know how to find Premier Klein. There was no head table, so I asked one of the serving staff; I figured they must know where he was seated. They did, and I made my way over to his table. Naturally, a crowd of people was gathered around him. I walked up, introduced myself and explained that we needed money for the Faculté and for the renovation of the student residence and construction of a new residence. He said, "How much do you need?" and told me to write the amount on a napkin sitting there on the table. I am very glad to say that I wrote the amount down on the napkin and that we got what we asked for: \$1 million from that napkin request.

That was the beginning of an intense lobbying process in which I took that pledge and leveraged the provincial commitment with the federal commitment with the municipal commitment and then, of course, with supporters from the university to obtain our objective. In the end, we got the bricks and mortar, saved the building and grew the reputation and visibility of the Faculté Saint-Jean.

I will always be grateful to Premier Klein for making that crucial initial commitment. After touring the renovated residence with his lovely wife, Colleen, at the official opening, he would then often refer to the Faculté as "the best-kept secret in the West."

I know that many across Alberta and Canada have their own Ralph Klein stories, their own memories of this political maverick. I join Calgarians, Albertans and Canadians in paying tribute to Premier Klein. My thoughts are with his family and many friends and colleagues as they grieve.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!
