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TRIBUTES

The Honourable Catherine S. Callbeck

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, June 18, 2014

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THE HONOURABLE CATHERINE S. CALLBECK

Hon. Claudette Tardif: Honourable senators, it is indeed an honour to pay tribute to our dear colleague Senator Catherine Callbeck.

I wish to thank Senator Callbeck for her extraordinary service to Canadians over the past four decades. Many have referred to her as a trailblazer for having broken down many barriers when it comes to women in politics, and indeed she has. We all know that in 1993 Senator Callbeck made history as the first woman ever elected premier in a general election. This remarkable achievement was made possible by women like Senator Callbeck willing to challenge the established mindset in male-dominated occupations such as politics.

Senator Callbeck has challenged the status quo throughout her life. When she attended Mount Allison University in the 1950s, she was the only woman in her business class. When she worked as a teacher at the New Brunswick Business College, she was the only woman on staff. When she worked for her family business, she dealt mainly with men. And when she first ran for office in 1974, it was still common to hear that politics was no place for a woman.

Fortunately, attitudes have evolved dramatically since then and we find many more women in leadership positions. Senator Callbeck has played no small part in helping shape this new landscape for women.

But one thing is evident above all else when looking at Senator Callbeck's illustrious career and contributions to Canadian public life. Her path has always been motivated by a deeply rooted passion for public service. Indeed, Senator Callbeck has spent most of her career dedicated to public service, and since her appointment to the Senate in 1997, she has drawn on her wealth of experience to advocate for the communities she represents and the issues that are dear to her heart.

On a personal note, I wish to thank Senator Callbeck for her advocacy for post-secondary education and literacy in this chamber. When I started in the Senate in 2005 and expressed my interest in post-secondary education to my new colleagues, Senator Callbeck approached me and told me, "Well, that's my area of interest too. We should have a national strategy." And in fact, my first speech in the Senate was on Senator Callbeck's inquiry on the state of post-secondary education in Canada. I wish to thank her for having drawn this most vital matter to our attention on many occasions.

Senator Callbeck brought to the Senate great wisdom, integrity, independence of thought and a tremendous work ethic. In fact, I believe Senator Callbeck has a near perfect attendance record. This demonstrates her passion for and dedication to public service. These qualities which have guided Senator Callbeck's actions throughout her time in this chamber have elevated the quality of debate in the Senate.

Dear Catherine, I thank you for your extraordinary public service to Canadians, and I wish you much happiness and good health in the next phase of your life and many wonderful years to come.
