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ALBERTA

Franco-Albertans Celebrating Winter

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

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FRANCO-ALBERTANS CELEBRATING WINTER

Hon. Claudette Tardif: Honourable senators, as you know, winter is inextricably linked with our Canadian identity. Ottawa has its Winterlude, and many communities from coast to coast have their annual winter festivals too. Today, I would like to talk about some of the francophone winter festivals that I have had the pleasure of taking part in over the years in my home province, Alberta.

On February 5 and 6, I had the pleasure of attending the third Flying Canoë Volant festival in Edmonton. According to Daniel Cournoyer, executive director of La Cité francophone and the event organizer, the Flying Canoë Volant is more than just a celebration. As he says, “It is an invitation to discover the history of the three founding peoples — First Nations, the Metis and the French — as they come together to share their culture with all Edmontonians.” Over 25,000 people took part in the 2016 edition of the event replete with lights and music and steeped in history, all inspired by a legend shared by First Nations and French Canadians.

A little farther north, in a small francophone community in Peace Country, the 34th edition of the Carnaval de Saint-Isidore once again drew in many Albertans from all over to participate in traditional activities such as taffy on snow, sleigh rides, folk music and village tales.

I am also getting ready to go to the 14th Calgary Maple Festival, which will take place on March 5 and 6 in Heritage Park. Festival-goers will enjoy entertainment by francophone performers from western Canada and Quebec. We will mark the 60th anniversary of the twinning of Calgary and Quebec City, and there will be a maple market, an exhibition of francophone services, ice sculptures, an exhibition of traps and furs, and various music and dance workshops.

Honourable senators, this is but a brief overview of the vitality of francophone communities in my province. Unfortunately, too few Canadians are aware of the richness of francophone culture in western Canada. This vitality is evident in the many winter activities recognized and appreciated by everyone, francophones and anglophones alike.

It is important to reiterate that the French language is very much present and alive in Alberta, and that we, Franco-Albertans, are certainly not afraid of winter. Alberta’s 80,000 francophones and 250,000 francophiles invite you, dear colleagues, to meet with them at your leisure any time of the year.
