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## ROADMAP FOR LINGUISTIC DUALITY

Statement by:

**The Honourable Claudette Tardif**

**Thursday, June 26, 2008**

## THE SENATE

Thursday, June 26, 2008

[Translation]

### ROADMAP FOR LINGUISTIC DUALITY

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, the Roadmap for Linguistic Duality in Canada released last week by the government is truly the path of least resistance. Yes, some new elements have been added, such as support for francophone immigration, arts and culture programs and the university scholarships program in translation. Those are all good initiatives.

However, the Roadmap suggests that more money is going to be allocated than the Liberals spent on their action plan. That kind of superficial claim is false. The action plan proposed annual budget increases from 2003 to 2008. Analysis of the budget for the Roadmap shows that it will provide more money than the 2003 Liberal budget did, but that in many areas, it is not allocating any more money than was spent for 2008, the final year of the action plan. Unfortunately, not only is this Roadmap three months late, it is very short-sighted.

Specifically, the Roadmap is silent on the subject of the public service despite the fact that the official language commissioner's latest report emphasized the importance of strengthening linguistic duality. What is the point of promoting official languages across Canada if no changes are required of the public service?

The budget for support for official language minority communities is remarkable only because it is so small: \$22.25 million is not nearly enough to meet the needs, and communities may be unable to reach their full potential as a result.

The amount allocated to economic development also seems rather arbitrary, because at first blush it does not appear to be shared equally among the provinces.

Furthermore, the new Program to Support Linguistic Rights, which partly replaces the former Court Challenges Program, will not provide assistance for all official language grievances. Complaints related to rights under the Official Languages Act or provincial or territorial legislation are not eligible, which narrows the program's scope significantly. Moreover, the eligibility criteria for the Program to Support Linguistic Rights are rather murky. To be eligible for the program, applicants will have to show that their case is likely to lead to new developments in language law and that they have tried mediation.

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Mediation can make the judicial process even more difficult for average Canadians; it may even penalize them. Consider the *Mahé* case in Alberta, which never would have been won through mediation. This new criterion is more of an obstacle to promoting linguistic rights than an asset. Much remains to be done to promote linguistic duality, and I doubt that the Roadmap is sufficient to reach the optimal development.

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