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## TRIBUTE

The Honourable Maria Chaput

Speech by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Wednesday, February 24, 2016

## THE SENATE

Wednesday, February 24, 2016

[Translation]

### TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE MARIA CHAPUT

**Hon. Diane Bellemare:** Dear Senator Chaput, I want to start off by saying that I was sad when I heard you would be leaving us early. Your consistent presence at the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance had become so reassuring for me. We spent so many hours together there, especially during debates on budget implementation bills.

I recently reread your response to Honourable Senator Nolin's inquiry calling the attention of the Senate to its role in protecting minorities. Not only does your speech illustrate your excellent understanding of our Senate, but it captures the essence of your work here, which is exactly what I would like to highlight today.

As everyone has mentioned, as the first Franco-Manitoban woman in the Senate, you have defended the French fact in Canada since 2002. During every committee meeting, be it the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages or other committees, you always did a brilliant job of representing your francophone community and our language, French. You did so in this chamber too, with your impeccable use of the French language. Not only did you represent the Franco-Manitoban minority you come from, but you also contributed to bilingualism and a strong francophone identity in Parliament and in Canada.

Your desire to promote French did not stop at the doors of this chamber. You also contributed to the vitality of the language of Molière well beyond the Senate. Recently, in February 2015, you advocated for francophone newspapers in minority communities by filing a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Lastly, I would like to add that, as a senator, you were a paragon and defender of the four founding principles of our Constitution as set out by the Supreme Court, and you reminded us of the importance of those principles during your inquiry into the role of the Senate. Those principles are federalism, respect for the rule of law, democracy and protection of minorities. You represented your region admirably, studied the bills that came before us thoroughly, and protected the minority that you come from.

My dear Senator Chaput, I wish you all the best in your retirement. I thank you so very much for all your valuable work in the Senate. I wish you many years of good health, so you can fully enjoy spending more time with your family. Lastly, I sincerely hope that the Prime Minister appoints another woman who will continue — and just as remarkably well — the important work you have done to protect the francophone minority in Manitoba. Whoever she is, she will have big shoes to fill.

It was a pleasure and an honour to have known you, dear senator. Thank you.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

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