ALLIANCE DES FEMMES DE LA FRANCOPHONIE CANADIENNE

Celebrating Francophone and Acadian Women Behind
Canada's Official Languages Act

Ottawa, March 19, 2019 – Canada's Official Language Act is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne (AFFC) alliance is proud to commemorate this historic moment by dedicating a special bilingual edition of its *PrésentEs!* magazine, which will be unveiled this evening at a reception held at the Ottawa Marriott Hotel where ministers, senators and community leaders will be in attendance. From a female and feminist point of view, the AFFC will showcase a retrospective of the last five decades that helped shape this famous legislative initiative, a pledge to this country's linguistic duality.

Through historical and judicial articles and portrayals of dedicated women, the AFFC wishes to ensure the ongoing wealth and diversity of cultural expression throughout official language minority communities and to highlight Francophone and Acadian women for their immeasurable contributions to the implementation, conservation and promotion of the *Official Languages Act.*

AFFC's president Lily Crist, mentioned that the principle of equality, which is at the heart of the *Official Languages Act*, has guided claims by thousands of Francophone and Acadian women over the last five decades. *The Official Languages Act*'s 50th anniversary is the perfect occasion to recognize the leadership and resilience of these women who had the boldness to take action to enhance the French language and push the feminist cause forward.

Ms. Crist also stated that women and women's groups have played a vital role in transmitting the often-unfamiliar French language and culture. As essential pillars of French minority communities, they are the guardians of our country's linguistic heritage. Today, we want to celebrate women who have shown us the way to our linguistic rights and who drive us to pursue the work in progress on the equality of our two official languages.

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Tourism for Official Languages and La Francophonie, stated that we find strong and devoted women in all economic sectors who continue to carry the torch of the official languages and light the way for their communities. I join the AFFC to celebrate women's very important contribution in this regard.

In fact, if the *Official Languages Act* is meant to uphold the government's promise to support the development of Francophone and Anglophone communities in minority settings; reality is quite different. The most recent statistics on Canadians' linguistic realities show that we are still far from being able to guarantee the right for women to live and reach their full potential solely in French despite the commitments to ensure Canada's linguistic duality.

The Senate Committee on Official Languages, which endorsed a leading article on the modernization of the Act in this special edition of the PrésentEs ! magazine, recognizes the necessity to adapt this Act, to reflect current

realities and ensures they intend to consider the comments and recommendations by stakeholders who submitted briefs and appeared before this committee.

In that respect, the AFFC hopes the federal government will listen to the recommendations it presented to the Standing Committee for the Official Languages concerning their study on Canadian's perspective on the modernization of the *Official Languages Act*.

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The AFFC defends the rights of 1,326 million women from Francophone and Acadian communities in Canada. It is devoted to raising awareness and promoting the role and contribution of Francophone women in their communities and the right to live and reach their full potential solely in French.

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