

Speech by Chief Justice Marc Noël

Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Federal Courts June 27, 2022 – 9:00 a.m.

Hello everyone, and welcome to this symposium to mark the 50th anniversary of the Federal Courts. Yes, here we are, together. We are gathered here, close to where everything began for the Federal Courts 51 years ago, and like the founding members, we are here in person.

We owe much gratitude to the members of the organizing committee for allowing us to be here in person today, the Honourable Simon Noël, Richard Boivin, René Leblanc, Donald Rennie and James O'Reilly, as well as Christine Norrena, Chantal Proulx and Terry Hancock. In February 2021, they had a call to make: Go for June 2021 or postpone by 18 months to June 2022 in the hope that better times were ahead. They postponed. It was not an easy call to make, but they made the right call. Thank you members of the committee, we are here in person today because of your inspired foresight. Let us

not forget the many of you who are participating in this symposium remotely. Welcome to everyone, regardless of how you are participating.

As you can see from the program that the organizing committee carefully put together, we have much to celebrate over the next three days. We will be reminiscing with lawyers and former judges, we will talk about our bilingual, bijural and national mission, our wide-ranging responsibilities in overseeing the biggest bureaucracy in the country, not to mention Indigenous law, immigration law, environmental law, patent law and the international dimension of our work.

Like I stated one year ago at the virtual meeting to mark the actual 50th anniversary, what we were witnessing, that morning on June 1, 1971 across the country, was the creation of a court that was bilingual, bijural and accessible to all in the official language of their choice. It was a shift toward modernity, openness and inclusion.

For the first time in legal history, wherever it unfolded, we saw two languages, two cultures and two distinct legal systems that become the cornerstone of a new court of law. The spirit of openness and respect that came out of that propitious combination has faithfully guided our destiny to the present day and has allowed us to respond to the initial challenges. But that is behind us. Looking to the future, we are confronted with new challenges. Just think of the Indigenous reconciliation efforts in which Canadian society must engage in embarking on the next chapter of our history.

It will be up to you, the judges of today and tomorrow, to meet the challenges of the next 50 years. I truly hope that this occasion to reflect and exchange over the next few days will provide us with a vision for renewal that will be as important and powerful as the vision that inspired our predecessors 51 years ago when they first gave life to the Federal Court of Canada.