



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## **EXPO 67**

### FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

## THE SENATE

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[Translation]

### EXPO 67

#### FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

**Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Dear colleagues, I rise today to mark the fiftieth anniversary of an important moment in our country's history. In April 1967, as part of the Centennial celebrations, Canada opened itself to the world. Montreal hosted the 1967 World Exposition, Expo 67, which had the theme Man and His World. For Montreal and for Quebec, the 1967 World Exposition also marked a turning point in the Quiet Revolution, which had begun in the early 1960s.

In 1967, I could feel the excitement taking hold of the city of Montreal. I really wanted to work as a hostess at one of the Expo 67 pavilions. Unfortunately, you had to be 18 and I was not old enough.

The event inspired hope and turned us toward the future; it opened the world to us by drawing on the dreams of the young, shaping the cultural identity of an entire generation that I belonged to. The event, which everyone celebrated, welcomed more than 50 million visitors, or two and a half times the population of Canada that year. Our country was a superstar around the world.

Passports in hand, ready to be stamped at the entrance of the pavilions, we were ready to take over the world, from Greece to Japan, by way of the Netherlands and even the USSR. The pavilions of France and the United States were spectacular structures.

I remember the euphoria and the excitement brought on by the culture shock and all the new technologies being presented. In 1967, the population of Quebec and Montreal was rather homogeneous. What memories!

We had to be creative and innovative as we prepared to host the world here in Canada. First, the subway needed to be built, and it was inaugurated in the fall of 1966. Next, after meeting the challenge of building the islands in the St. Lawrence, which required some 28 metric tons of rock as fill, most of which came from the excavations for the Montreal metro and material from the bottom of the river bed, the city's road network also had to be revamped in order to welcome thousands of visitors.

The workers responded very capably to these major infrastructure challenges. Six months before the opening, approximately 6,000 labourers were working on the site. I have to wonder if we would be able to achieve as much, in such a short time, today in 2017.

As a final point, honourable senators, did you know that the idea of hosting the World's Fair in Montreal came from a senator who was also the Speaker of this chamber? Indeed, the idea was publicly expressed for the first time by Quebec Senator Mark Drouin on August 25, 1958, at the World Exposition in Brussels. He suggested that Montreal should host the World Exposition in 1967 to mark Canada's centenary. This just goes to show that great ideas can come from the upper chamber.

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