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LES IMPATIENTS

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

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[Translation]

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Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today to commend a Quebec organization for its exceptional work. Les Impatients is celebrating its 25th anniversary this very day. Its mission is to help people with mental health issues through artistic expression.

In 1992, there was a one-time, 10-day event at the Louis-H. Lafontaine Hospital, now known as the Institut universitaire en santé mentale de Montréal, during which patients were invited to participate in creative workshops. Imagine everyone's surprise, once the event was over, when they saw the patients waiting at the door because they wanted to keep creating. Thus was born the idea of making the service available to people with mental health issues on a more permanent basis.

You might be wondering why the program is called Les Impatients. The name reminds us of those flowers that grow in the shade and are so eager to bloom, much like all these patients who are so eager to create.

Creative workshops are now put on for free, and the organization fosters interaction with the community through exhibits featuring the participants' work. Over 600 people a week attend workshops in Montreal as well as in Drummondville, Saint-Lambert, Joliette, and Sorel-Tracy.

In addition to creating visual art, participants can express their creativity in many other ways, such as dance, music therapy, and comic strips. These initiatives help people feel less isolated and give them the freedom to let their creative juices flow. They are not told what to create, and their work is not analyzed. They create in a judgment-free zone. Participants know that their work may be exhibited and shared, and they are very proud of that.

According to an Université de Montréal study, health outcomes improved for 87 per cent of workshop participants, and the hospitalization rate dropped by 66 per cent. The project is so successful that six hospitals and two art galleries are now partnering with the organization, which has 11 creative spaces in Montreal and the regions.

Another success story I want to tell you about is the organization's art bank. Les Impatients have kept all the artwork produced by the participants and now have a collection of more than 15,000 works. This colossal work led to the establishment of this, the first collection of its kind in Canada, and a precious addition to our national heritage, indeed.

I commend the exceptional work of this organization, the team, the board of directors, the volunteers, as well as the participants and all those who contribute to making this initiative so vibrant in our communities. I especially want to thank its founder, Lorraine Palardy, who understood the impatience of so many with mental health problems.

Thank you for your attention.
