



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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**THE LATE MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS, C.C., O.Q.**

Statement by:  
The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Thursday, December 16, 2021

## THE SENATE

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[Translation]

### THE LATE MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS, C.C., O.Q.

**Hon. Diane Bellemare:** Esteemed colleagues, “there is no hurry, one always gets there in the end.” That’s what Marie-Claire Blais wrote in *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel* in 1965.

Today I would like to pay tribute to Marie-Claire Blais, the great Quebec novelist, playwright, screenwriter and poet, who died on November 30 at the age of 82. I wish to extend my sincere condolences to Ms. Blais’s family and friends.

At the age of 20, she published her first novel, *La Belle Bête* — *Mad Shadows* in English. A rising star, she was awarded a bursary from the Guggenheim Foundation and set to work writing *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel*, which won the Prix Médicis, a French literary award, in 1966. A prolific and speedy writer, she produced many novels, five plays and several poetry collections.

She made her mark on French-Canadian literature for over 60 years, a mark that will certainly endure for years to come. She was a champion of the Francophonie as well.

She was awarded many literary prizes for her body of work and won the Governor General’s award several times.

She was honoured with many awards and distinctions, including, for example, the Order of Canada in 1975, the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal in 1992, and the National Order of Quebec in 1995.

Over several decades, she managed to put Quebec’s sometimes very difficult realities into words and poems, exploring themes like poverty, the “great darkness” and the Quiet Revolution.

A December 2 article in *Le Devoir* had this to say about Ms. Blais, and I quote:

A visionary well ahead of her time, she wrote about homosexuality in the late 1960s in Quebec and was among the first to take an interest in racism, the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community, the homeless, and the oppressed of all kinds.

In an interview, she once said the following:

I believe [that my characters] all believe they’re moving forward, not looking to the past, but forward toward a rebuilding, to a social redemption based on peace. They believe in it, they hope.

Her work has been translated into many languages. She may have left us, but her work remains, and anyone can consult it to better understand key aspects of Quebec’s history.

I urge you to do just that, colleagues, and to discover this great French Canadian author.

Thank you.

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