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NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

THE SENATE

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Diane Bellemare: Honourable senators, I would first like to congratulate His Honour the Speaker on his appointment.

I am rising today to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, which took place on Sunday, December 6, 2015.

Every year on December 6, we commemorate the tragic anniversary of the massacre that occurred at the École Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989, when 14 young women were killed just because they were women. Marc Lépine said so himself in writing.

We might be tempted to believe that violence against women is a distant problem and that it only happens in places like Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Africa. That is not true. Take for example, the troubling situation of Aboriginal women here in Canada, who are too often the victims of violence. Think too of the women who are trapped in toxic relationships and those who are harassed at work.

The Council of Europe, which is made up of 47 countries, has been proactive in the fight to end violence against women. In fact, on May 11, 2011, it adopted the Istanbul Convention to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. The purpose of this convention, which has been ratified by 19 countries, including France, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands, is to take real action toward achieving gender equality by putting an end to gender-based violence against women.

Article 3 of the convention defines the term “violence against women,” which is understood as:

... a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

The terms of the convention require the state to effectively fight this violence, in all its forms, by implementing measures to prevent violence, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. This could definitely be a source of inspiration for Canada.

Lastly, I would like to remind honourable senators that after the École Polytechnique massacre, a group of women got together and worked tirelessly to prevent gun tragedies. One of those women was Suzanne Laplante-Edward, whom I have met before, the mother of Anne-Marie Edward, who was murdered on December 6, 1989, at École Polytechnique. Ms. Laplante-Edward and all those women will certainly be pleased with the Quebec government, which has introduced a bill concerning firearms registration. Bill 64 provides that any non-restricted firearm must be registered and that the government must assign a unique number to each firearm registered.

Quebec’s Minister of Public Safety, Pierre Moreau, pointed out that this initiative reflects the desire of the vast majority of Quebecers and the unanimous intention of the National Assembly and that it will prevent tragedies involving firearms. From now on, any police officer called to the scene of a domestic dispute will be able to determine whether there could be any firearms at that location.

Honourable senators, I sincerely hope that this type of tragedy will never happen again.

Thank you for listening.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!