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WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

Centennial Anniversary

Statement by:

The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Thursday, October 6, 2016

THE SENATE

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[Translation]

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Diane Bellemare (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, since 1992, Status of Women Canada has been recognizing specific aspects of women's history in Canada in the month of October. It is in that context that I want to acknowledge today an initiative of the Association de la presse francophone, which launched a website yesterday and a series of three special issues to mark the hundredth anniversary of the women's right to vote. These special issues will be published in more than 225,000 print-runs in every francophone minority paper in Canada and more than 700,000 print-runs in English-language papers in Quebec through a partnership with the Quebec Community Newspaper Association.

Like many of you, honourable colleagues, I took part in this project. I chose to pay tribute to Marie-Claire Kirkland-Casgrain, a Quebecer who inspired me greatly. As you know, she was the first woman to be elected as a member of the National Assembly, the first woman to be appointed to cabinet, the first woman to be appointed acting premier, and the first female judge in the Court of Quebec.

• (1340)

As a politician, she made progress toward creating greater social equality for women on several fronts. She helped gain

recognition for women's rights by sponsoring Bill 16, which put an end to the legal incapacity of married women by making it possible for them to legally sign a lease or open a bank account without their husband's authorization.

It is my fervent hope that more women will choose to get involved in public affairs so that we can achieve gender parity in our political representation as soon as possible.

You can read our colleagues' articles at www.clique-clicking.ca. The Association de la presse francophone has partnered with school boards across the country and expects 300,000 people to visit the site, which is a source of inspiration for young people across the country.

In closing, honourable senators, I suggest you go see "Nice Women Don't Want the Vote," an exhibition whose title is drawn from words uttered by Manitoba Premier Sir Rodmond Roblin during a heated exchange with suffragist Nellie McClung. The exhibition was created by the Manitoba Museum and is presented at the Canadian Museum of History until March 12, 2017. It outlines the historical context of the suffragist movement in Manitoba, the first province to give women the right to vote in 1916.

The one hundredth anniversary of women's right to vote is certainly a turning point in Canadian history, which is why I felt it was important to share these initiatives with you. Thank you.
