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LITTLE WARRIORS

Awareness, Prevention
and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

THE SENATE

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AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on Monday, May 28, I had the great pleasure and honour of attending the first annual Be Brave Luncheon, supporting Little Warriors, in Edmonton.

Little Warriors is a national organization dedicated to the awareness, prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse. Its aim is to help to change the world for the lives of children and youth who have been damaged by the violent acts of sexual abuse. I am very proud to sit on the organization's board of directors and to contribute to its long-standing commitment to ending child sexual abuse. The first Be Brave Luncheon was a fundraiser for the Little Warrior's \$3.4-million project aimed at building the Be Brave Ranch, Canada's would-be first treatment centre specifically designed to help child sexual abuse survivors.

During the luncheon, former NHL player Theo Fleury described his personal story of sexual abuse in a presentation called "Don't Quit Before the Miracle." He reminded us that courage is contagious, that even though there are many wonderful, innovative ideas for change in the world, the only way they can effectively make a difference is if somebody stands out, speaks out and finds the bravery it takes to do something no one has done before.

It is these brave souls that make a real difference and motivate others to do the same.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, education and information go hand in hand with child sexual abuse prevention. One in three girls experiences an unwanted sexual act at an average age of 12. One in six boys experiences an unwanted sexual act at the average age of four. A disquieting 95 per cent of child sexual abuse victims know their perpetrator. The vast majority of victims of this type of abuse suffer consequences ranging from drug and alcohol abuse to serious psychological disorders. These facts tell an alarming story.

However, child sexual exploitation remains taboo, difficult to talk about and painful to discuss. I want to commend the Little Warriors for their continued dedication to prevention and raising awareness of this serious issue, and those who attended the benefit lunch for taking a stand against this type of abuse.

[English]

Honourable senators, Theo Fleury offered us a message of hope, hope to one day be able to confront the past, hope to be able to help other victims, hope to move forward and hope to prevent other children from suffering.

Please join me in honouring his story and in thanking Little Warriors and Glori Meldrum, the organization's founder and chair, for working tirelessly to provide a safety net for our children, a place and people for them to turn to when they need help, and the tools and resources needed for them to heal.