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## NATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, May 7, 2013

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### NATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DAY

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, as did Senator Callbeck, I rise to draw your attention to the fact that today is National Child and Youth Mental Health Day, a day set aside for Canadians to come together to support the mental health of our children and young adults.

We all know the statistics; we have heard them many times, including in this chamber. Most mental disorders begin before a person turns 25. It is estimated that 20 per cent of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder.

The most horrifying statistic of all: Suicide accounts for 24 per cent of all deaths among our young people aged 15 to 24. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Canadian youth aged 10 to 24. As Senator Ataullahjan told us last year, we have the third-highest rate of youth suicide in the industrialized world.

The good news is that there are medical and social interventions that can help. Another statistic: It is estimated that 70 per cent of childhood causes of mental health problems can be effectively addressed through early diagnosis and intervention.

There are many barriers to achieving this, and a number of senators have spoken about these in the past, but what I want to focus on today is the very first hurdle: Before a young person can get help, someone has to reach out and talk about the fact that they need help. Too many of our young people still feel there is no one to whom they can turn when the issue is mental health.

Keli Anderson, President and CEO of the Institute of Families for Child and Youth Mental Health and the co-founder of May 7 as National Child and Youth Mental Health Day, wants to help Canadian families talk about mental health. In her words:

Approximately 2 million children and youth in Canada have mental health challenges, and many of them feel that nobody understands them or cares about them. We want to

change that and we're asking people to stop on May 7 to show and tell children and youth: I care about you.

That is the theme of this year's National Child and Youth Mental Health Day: I Care About You.

The response from across the country has been overwhelming. From coast to coast to coast, there are events going on today to start people talking about mental health, where parents, young people, teachers, friends and neighbours can come together and let each other know that they belong, that there are people who care, that there are people they can talk to about mental health and concerns they may be having.

Comox Valley in British Columbia has had three suicides of young people in the last two years. Over 400 people there are coming together today, including the families of these three young people, to mark National Child and Youth Mental Health Day.

Pond Inlet in Nunavut heard about the day and got in touch with Ms. Anderson. Everyone in this tiny community — 25 adults and 50 children — will be wearing "I Care About You" stickers today.

Honourable senators, there are examples like this all across Canada. Today is just the beginning. Ms. Anderson, together with other parents and concerned Canadians, is launching a virtual Family Smart Community today at [www.familysmart.ca](http://www.familysmart.ca) to, in her words, "connect Canadian families to each other and to others who want to understand what is important to families for child, youth and family mental health."

The power of the Internet is to bring people together from across Canada and beyond, to help each other, to learn from each other and to discover that Canadians care about each other. This virtual community is the first of its kind — a national community of families, by families, coming together for child and youth mental health.

Honourable senators, please join with me in congratulating Ms. Anderson and her colleagues on the success of this day and extending our best wishes for success on the launch of the Family Smart Community.