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NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, December 5, 2013

THE SENATE

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NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Claudette Tardif: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against women, which is tomorrow, December 6.

Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, this day marks the sad anniversary of the murders of 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal in 1989. They were killed because they were women. Since that tragic day, some progress has been made in Canada. Not so long ago, many forms of violence against women were trivialized.

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Domestic violence was seen as a private matter. Too many victims kept quiet because they were ashamed or fearful or because they thought they were to blame. In many cases, even when victims spoke up about violence, they were sent home and nothing was really done.

Far too many women felt isolated and trapped, and as a result, violence sometimes led to greater tragedy. Over the past decades, measures promoting basic rights and gender equality, the creation of shelters and other victim assistance organizations, awareness campaigns and plenty of hard work in the field by feminist organizations have had a positive impact on the lives of many women.

All of these efforts have encouraged victims to break their silence or have prevented violence from happening in the first place. They have awakened women to the fact that they have the right to live free of violence. At a more basic level, these efforts have spurred cultural change that now enables us to take significant and meaningful action to curb violence against women.

Honourable senators, despite that progress, violence against women is still a serious problem. Around the world, one in three women will be beaten, raped or battered by a partner at some point in her life. In Canada, despite undeniable progress, every day over 3,000 women and their 2,500 children turn to various emergency shelters to escape domestic violence.

On average, one woman is killed by her partner every six days. Over the past 30 years, there have been nearly 600 known but unresolved cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women, mothers and sisters.

This violence continues for several reasons: impunity, silence, lack of support and resources, and a culture that still does not value women in many respects.

Just last week I read an article condemning sexual violence on Canadian university campuses and the fact that some police officers still place part of the blame on the victims.

Honourable senators, tomorrow, thousands of Canadians will gather to participate in one of many vigils that will be held across the country, joining their voices to condemn the violence experienced by women across Canada and around the world.