

## THE SENATE

Tuesday, December 6, 1994

The Senate met at 2:00 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### THE HONOURABLE LUCIEN BOUCHARD

BEST WISHES ON RECOVERY

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, before I make my statement, I want to first take the opportunity in this chamber to note the dreadful ordeal which was suffered last week by a fellow parliamentarian, the Honourable Lucien Bouchard. I believe all members of this house would wish to join with me in sending our prayers and our good wishes to him, his wife, Audrey, and his two small sons for a successful and speedy recovery.

#### NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF TRAGEDY AT L'ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, we did not choose December 6 as the day to discuss violence against women in Canada. Instead, five years ago, at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal, a deeply disturbed individual who hated women took a semi-automatic weapon and shot 27 people, killing 14 female students before committing suicide.

We will not forget the 14 young lives which ended on that day. Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Marie Klueznik, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte. We also remember the families and the friends of these women who have suffered, and continue to suffer, the anguish of that brutal act.

Today, we pause again to remind ourselves that women are being victimized daily by violence in many forms: mental, physical and sexual. Statistics Canada reports that 51 per cent of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence by a man in their adult lives, most of them in their own homes, and by men they know. In 1993 alone, 63 women were killed by their present or former partners. It is estimated that less than one-third of all incidents of violence are even reported.

While it is impossible to point to a single cause for all of this violence, the easy availability of guns has long been seen as a major factor. A woman is shot to death every six days in Canada. In the vast majority of these cases, a legally owned firearm has been used.

Last week, the Minister of Justice released a comprehensive gun control program, to be followed by legislation in the new year. That program includes increased sentences for the use of firearms in a range of crimes, provisions to deal with gun smuggling, a new national registration system, and a ban on several types of firearms, including the Ruger Mini-14 assault rifle used in the Montreal murders.

The government is also taking action on other forms of violence against women, including Bill C-41 to deal with breaches of trust, particularly in relationships between doctors and female patients. That bill also provides for harsher penalties in hate crimes against women and others; Bill C-42 will make peace bonds more effective in order to protect victims of domestic violence. We are also developing a legislative response to deal with the so-called "drunk defence" in rape cases. Our colleague Senator Gigantès presently has a private bill before this house to begin the parliamentary debate on that issue.

These measures are necessary, and they are being pursued vigorously. However, women and men across the country are also working together to ensure that this is no longer a silent issue. Together, honourable colleagues, we must attack the economic and social problems which foster the fear and the insecurity, and indeed the ignorance, which in turn breeds the anger and the hatred that promotes violence like the tragedy at l'École Polytechnique.

Legislators can, and must, pass laws to stop violence. Each of us must use our positions in public life to send a clear and unequivocal message that we cannot and will not tolerate acts of violence and terrorism against innocent women, and indeed against anyone in our society.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mira Spivak:** Honourable senators, on this National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we honour the memory of those young engineering students and we remember their families.

Had it not been for this terrible act of violence, these fourteen young women would by now have finished their studies and be leading active and happy lives. Their future must be replaced by our collective memory, and their untimely deaths transformed into the recognition by all Canadians, but particularly by our political leaders, our judges, our police officers and our educators, that we have the responsibility to ensure that women can live their lives in greater safety.

[English]

Much has occurred since December 6, 1989. In the wake of that day, the Canadian panel on violence against women was convened to enquire into the problem of violence against women and to propose solutions. The report of that panel, handed down a little more than a year ago, contained hundreds of recommendations.