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STAND UP FOR MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Statement by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

THE SENATE

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STAND UP FOR MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I rise today to draw your attention to Stand Up for Mental Health Day on Parliament Hill. Mental health is a serious issue in Canadian society, as I am sure senators are well aware. One in five Canadians will face some form of mental illness during his or her lifetime.

In response to the rise in mental illness in our society, many honourable senators will recall the report on mental health of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, entitled *Out of the Shadows*. It was highly praised in the medical community for raising awareness of the issues faced by those with mental illness and the health care community trying to help them.

As the former Mayor of Vancouver, I was faced not only with issues such as homelessness and addiction, but the underlying problem of mental illness in many of Vancouver's most vulnerable. Although I was not part of the committee when it studied mental illness, I have certainly had many personal experiences that have helped me to better understand the problems with our system.

One of the ways that the Greater Vancouver area has adapted to help those with mental illness is the Stand Up for Mental Health series. Stand Up for Mental Health teaches stand-up

comedy to people with mental illness as a way of building self-esteem and fighting public prejudice, stigma and discrimination. The organization has groups in Vancouver, Chilliwack, Abbotsford, Courtenay, Edmonton, Fort Frances, Guelph, Ottawa and Toronto, with new groups starting in Victoria and Halifax. They are also developing programs for Metis and Inuit communities.

Tonight there will be a reception put on by this group. I realize that mental health and comedy seems to be a strange combination, but when I was the Mayor of Vancouver, I attended one of these events and actually participated in it. I was amazed at the things these people do — sometimes not unlike Question Period in this chamber.

Tonight I am honoured to co-sponsor Stand Up for Mental Health Day on the Hill. Co-sponsors from the other place include Ujjal Dosanjh; Libby Davies; as well as Dr. Colin Carrie, who is parliamentary secretary to Minister Leona Aglukkaq; and representatives from the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Parliamentarians and staff alike are invited to a performance this evening in room 200 West Block at 6:30 p.m. There will also be a wine and cheese reception with the comics starting at 5:30 p.m., before their performance. I invite one and all to come and see what an amazing performance is put on by this group.