



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## MENTAL HEALTH

Statement by:

The Honourable Yonah Martin

Wednesday, February 13, 2013

## THE SENATE

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### MENTAL HEALTH

**Hon. Yonah Martin:** Honourable senators, yesterday was Let's Talk Day in B.C., and so I continue our conversation on mental illness today.

Let us talk about a very important topic, honourable senators, that likely affects every one of us and millions of Canadians, directly or indirectly. In fact, according to Health Canada, one in three Canadians will face a neurological disorder, injury or psychiatric disease in their lifetime. Neurological diseases, disorders and injuries represent one of the leading causes of disability in the Canadian population.

[*Translation*]

Mental illness affects people of all ages, regardless of their level of education, income or culture. It is costly for patients, their families, their caregivers, their communities and the health care system.

[*English*]

There are no boundaries that mental illnesses cannot cross. Therefore, they can affect any one of us.

Tragically, there is still a stigma attached to mental illnesses in our society. People suffering from mental illnesses may be afraid to seek treatment for fear of reprisal from those who could not or would not understand.

[*Translation*]

Education and research are vital to overcoming the obstacles that marginalize people with mental illnesses while making society aware that it is important to be supportive rather than add to the problem by making generalizations, assumptions and judgments based on ignorance.

[*English*]

As someone who has been affected directly by family members' suffering from mental illnesses, I was pleased to attend, on behalf of Minister Leona Aglukkaq, Brain Canada's inaugural Bell Mental Health Research Training Awards in Vancouver on February 8, 2013.

In 2011, the Government of Canada set aside \$100 million to establish the Canada Brain Research Fund, based on a public-private model that matches private donations dollar for dollar with federal funding. Brain Canada, the only national non-profit organization devoted to supporting all neuroscience research, awarded several studentships and fellowships to talented recipients, the next generation of researchers.

[*Translation*]

One of the highlights of the event was meeting with and listening to the speech given by Canadian Olympic champion, Clara Hughes, national spokesperson for Bell's third annual Let's Talk Day initiative.

[*English*]

Clara explained that despite the rigorous training to win medals in both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games, nothing was tougher than her struggles with depression. She is a champion in every sense of the word.

Finally, I want to commend the leadership of Inez Jabalpurwala, President and CEO of Brain Canada, and Mary Deacon, Chair of the Bell Mental Health Initiative, for the success of their effective Bell Let's Talk initiative.

Honourable senators, let us join the conversation on mental health. Let us see how we can end the stigma. Let us talk.

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