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THE LATE CONSTABLE SHAELYN YANG

Statement by:
The Honourable Bev Busson

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

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Hon. Bev Busson: Honourable senators, I am heartbroken as I stand today to pay tribute to Constable Shaelyn Yang, who was murdered in Burnaby, British Columbia, on October 18, and whose regimental funeral is today.

I speak to you as a colleague, an ex-police officer and mother of an RCMP officer as well. One death in the line of duty is one too many. Sadly, as I speak, I know that this will not be the last tribute that will be given for a fallen officer who will be killed in the line of duty. It is hard to explain why anyone would risk their personal safety on a daily basis, knowing that death or serious injury is just one bad call away.

Let me tell you about Constable Shaelyn Yang: She was only 31 years old when she died, and had so much to live for. She was a wife, a daughter, a sister and a friend to many. She was the poster child of everything you could wish for in a police officer. She was educated, came from a diverse background and had a kind and compassionate personality.

She was born in Taiwan and came to Canada with her family to chase the dream of getting a Western education and becoming a Canadian. She was a University of British Columbia, or UBC, graduate and could have chosen any career, but she always wanted to become a member of the RCMP. As a student, she volunteered for Victim Services at the Richmond detachment, where she was highly regarded by all those who had worked with her.

She graduated from Depot in December 2019 and was posted to the Burnaby detachment. Soon afterward, she joined the special team, working with the weakest and most vulnerable

within the mental health and homeless outreach program at Burnaby detachment. It was this generous and selfless calling that ultimately ended her short but important life — at the very hands of someone she was trying to help. She died bravely trying to save the life of a city Parks worker, who was alongside her, as well as her own life.

Colleagues, I have heard comments that this is what the police sign up for, but I can tell you, personally, that this is not what they sign up for, any more than a politician signs up to be harassed, attacked or assassinated. They sign up to make a difference and never imagine they will be a name and a regimental number on a cold stone memorial wall.

Colleagues, when a police officer dies in the line of duty, we often observe a moment of silence, as well as speak highly of their sacrifice, how we respect their role and hope this will never happen again. I urge you to keep Constable Yang in your thoughts and prayers the next time you speak about the police. We can have a positive effect on the narrative of the unique nature of policing in Canada, and help guard our collective futures. Words matter. Our words matter.

Speaking of words, I would like you to consider the words of a handwritten note left by Constable Yang's police partners on the fence near where she died:

I hope you heard us coming. I drove as fast as I could. You were not alone. I'm sorry I didn't make it in time. We'll take the watch from here. Rest in Peace.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.
