

**SPEAKING NOTES**  
**THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA**  
**SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE UNVEILING OF THE PORTRAIT OF THE**  
**RIGHT HONOURABLE JEAN CHRÉTIEN**

**OTTAWA**  
**MAY 25, 2010**

Mr. Speaker,  
Prime Minister,  
Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,  
Our Guest of Honour, the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Senate of Canada and Honourable Senators, I wish to extend our best wishes to the 20<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Canada on the occasion of the unveiling of the official portrait of the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien. Canadians from coast to coast to coast recognize his 36 years of parliamentary service. Clearly, his dedicated service to Canada through a long and assiduous career is remarkable.

There are many events from the past which come to mind during occasions such as that of today. Some will recall that Jean Chrétien was the Minister of Justice at the time of the patriation of the Constitution of Canada. At that time I was the Human Rights Commissioner for New Brunswick and participated with Richard Hatfield in those federal-provincial-territorial meetings, where I first met Jean Chrétien. Together with Premier Davis of Ontario, we were strong supporters of an entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms and therefore worked closely with Mr. Chrétien. It was therefore only appropriate that on April 17, 1982, that he was on stage when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, sitting at a table on a stage set up outside the Centre Block, took pen in hand and signed the Royal Proclamation.

The Registrar General signed in the space allocated to him, and Prime Minister Trudeau followed suit, signing over the title of Prime Minister of Canada. After doing so, he invited Jean Chrétien to affix his signature as well. There wasn't

a space allocated for the Minister of Justice, but he rose to the occasion and boldly stepped forward to sign just beneath the Queen's signature.

It was an unplanned moment and it is doubtful that there were many who even realized that it wasn't part of the program. The Queen signed, other people signed, it all appeared to be going according to plan.

There are a number of insights which might be drawn from these events, but a clear message is this: when the Prime Minister suggests that something be done, people pay attention. It seems that this was not lost on the future 20<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister.

Recently, I had the opportunity to show Mr. Chrétien that same "Constitution Table" which is located in the Senate Speaker's Office with a replica of the Royal Proclamation on it, at which time he pointed out the smudge caused by the nib being broken when he signed his name to this historic parchment. I will leave it to him to tell who broke the pen and what was or was not said. However, the photos and television coverage show the Queen smiling.

Capturing on canvass the character which Jean Chrétien has shown on so many occasions would be a significant challenge to any artist. In this case, the individual who faced that challenge was Mr. Christian Martin Nicholson, a fellow New Brunswicker.

The skill, passion and craftsmanship evident in his art has long garnered critical acclaim and attention, beginning in the days when he was a student honing his craft at the University of New Brunswick at Saint John. Later, at Mount Allison University's Fine Arts Department, Mr. Nicholson received a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Distinction, the first such honour in the history of that Department.

The first portrait painted by Mr. Nicholson was of his grandmother. His work is now held in numerous permanent and private collections, coast-to-coast, including in universities, boardrooms and even down the street at Rideau Hall. While he continues to expand his distinguished portfolio, there is still evident in each of his portraits an evocation of the simplicity, tenderness and personal pathos, as if he was still painting his own beloved grandmother.

Mr. Prime Minister, I will not be surprised to hear, from those appraising the portrait of JeanChrétien, that in it we see a sharp-witted and astute politician, one tempered by small town qualities of humility and common sense, mixed with big city sophistication and joie de vivre.

Portraits of our former Prime Ministers grace the halls of the parliament buildings and are a lasting tribute to the hard work, dedication and inspiration which each brought to the position. Today's is only the 20<sup>th</sup> portrait to be added to the collection and I am confident that it will be admired both for its style and for its subject.