



NEWS RELEASE

The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate

Speaker of the Senate Noël A. Kinsella discusses Senate reform at the 52nd Canadian Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

FREDERICTON, NB July 24, 2014 — The Speaker of the Senate, the Honourable Noël A. Kinsella, addressed the provincial and territorial speakers from across Canada on Wednesday at their annual regional meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Speaker Kinsella explored with his colleagues the implications of the recent Supreme Court opinion on the constitutional requirements for reforming the Senate.

“The Court,” said Speaker Kinsella, “affirmed the distinct role of the Senate as a complementary legislative chamber of sober second thought within Parliament. It also clarified that the minimum level of support needed for changes to that role is ‘7/50,’ which means the agreement of at least seven provinces representing at least half of the population.”

Speaker Kinsella described a number of the Senate’s key functions and illustrated them with examples of Senate activities, including several drawn from his 24 years in the Upper Chamber.

Our Parliamentary system’s success in promoting prosperity and the practice of freedom over 147 years, the Speaker said, suggests that the Fathers of Confederation were insightful in their deliberations and that the Senate has served its intended role rather well. At the same time, it is worth ensuring that the system is as robust and responsive as it can be as society evolves.

“We now know from the Supreme Court that any significant changes to the Senate must involve the provinces,” Speaker Kinsella said.

The Senate Speaker noted the provincial and territorial interest in a strong, functioning Senate. He suggested that the provincial and territorial speakers could facilitate a dialogue amongst Senators and their respective provincial legislators concerning reforms that would best serve the given provinces and territories.

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