

**NOTES FOR A TOAST TO BE GIVEN BY
SPEAKER KINSELLA AT A RECEPTION HOSTED
BY THE SPEAKER AND THE CANADIAN EMBASSY**

Your Excellencies,
Ambassador Fox,
Esteemed Guests,
Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to thank my co-host, the Canadian Ambassador, for arranging this invaluable opportunity to meet so many friends of Canada.

Although Albania has an ancient history, Canada's relationship with your country dates back only some 60 years. The first contacts began in the late 1940s, when Canada was involved as an observer with the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans.

Since Albania's first democratic elections in 1991, Canada's policy has been to support its shift to democracy and a market economy, and to promote the establishment of lasting trade and investment ties.

To these ends, Canada has supported the economic, political, and military reforms Albania has undertaken in its efforts to join both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Indeed, we embarked on a new chapter in our relationship a few months ago; as you know, today, we are full-fledged allies, now that Albania formally acceded to NATO in July 2009.

Canada and Albania are also developing other ties. Our trade and investment relations, although fairly slight, have increased over the past few years. In 2008, our two countries traded over 40 million dollars worth of goods – a substantial increase since 2001, when two-way trade totalled only 3 million dollars. Although the balance of trade is in Canada's favour, the establishment of a good trading relationship can only help strengthen our ties and lead to increased contact.

I am pleased to see that many of the Canadian companies who are behind these growing figures are here, as are many Albanian officials who can attest to the work being done.

Of course, we must not forget the important contribution that the 22,000 people of Albanian descent in Canada play in fostering good relations between us. Some of them are even present with us today and I want to congratulate you for your role in building the bridge between our peoples.

That is why my visit here is so important. It reinforces these budding contacts and allows our countries to get to know each other better. Nothing can replace personal contact as a way of developing real understanding.

Thank you again. Please join me in raising a toast to the Canadian ambassador. I wish you and your staff, indeed everyone present at this reception, success in your future endeavours.