

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

**OPENING OF THE 40TH SESSION OF THE**  
**ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE (APF)**

**OTTAWA, CANADA**  
**JULY 7, 2014**

Your Excellency Governor General Johnston,  
The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean,  
Mr. Secretary General of La Francophonie,  
Speaker Scheer,  
Minister of International Development and Minister of La Francophonie,  
Madam President of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie and Chair of  
the Canadian Branch of the APF,  
Honourable parliamentarians,  
Distinguished guests,

It is a pleasure to participate in this 40th session of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie here in my own country. Canada has two official languages, French and English, with close to 10 million people speaking French of which roughly 7 million have French as their first language.

The francophone presence varies greatly across Canada, with Québec having the highest number of people who speak French as their first language. Ontario and my home province of New Brunswick are next in line.

New Brunswick is the only province in Canada that is officially bilingual. In 1969, New Brunswick passed the *New Brunswick Official Languages Act*, recognizing the importance of linguistic duality and the fundamental right of its

residents to receive services from the provincial government in the language of their choice.

Both Quebec and New Brunswick have their own representatives, separate from Canada's, in the various institutions of La Francophonie.

The Senate of Canada plays a very important role in protecting minority rights, particularly minority language rights. Professor Benoît Pelletier of the University of Ottawa noted that the Senate has long served as a forum for groups that are under-represented in the House of Commons, including women and ethnic, religious, Aboriginal and linguistic groups.

Canada has enjoyed many international cultural, economic and collaborative opportunities as a result of sharing the French language. Parliamentary assemblies such as the APF strengthen one of the elements that brings us together, the French language, and contributes to building the close, dynamic and productive relationships we have established through the institutions of La Francophonie.

Please allow me to conclude by paying tribute to and thanking your president, my colleague and friend, the Hon. Andrée Champagne, who will soon be leaving the Senate. Over the course of her career, first in the arts and then in politics, she has tirelessly promoted the French language, this "langue belle," in the words of singer Yves Duteil, with the determination for which she is known. I would also like to sincerely thank each of you for coming to our national capital for this meeting. May your deliberations be interesting and productive.