

**A TOAST GIVEN BY SPEAKER KINSELLA
AT A RECEPTION TO BE HOSTED BY THE AMBASSADOR
FOR CANADA IN POLAND**

Your Excellency Ambassador Preston, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Czesc (Chesh),

On behalf of the members of the delegation, allow me to tell you how pleased we are to be here with you at this Canada Day reception. I join with you in thanking Ambassador Preston for hosting us here this evening. On Canada Day back in Ottawa, tens of thousands of people gather in front of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa to listen to music and watch fireworks. Although we are here in Poland, the spirit of our nation shines through as we celebrate Canada's 140th birthday, and we are very glad to be able to partake in the festivities here.

As you know, Canada has a large and vital Polish community, so it is only natural that relations between our countries are so warm. The bonds between Poland and Canada are like those between family members – we welcome every opportunity to meet, to explore new avenues for trade and investment, and to expand our co-operation in the international arena. It is a pleasure to be here this evening to see and be part of some of the Canadian community in Poland.

There are many ties between Canada and Poland, and some that go back a long time. There were individual Poles in Canada as early as 1752, and the first groups of Polish families settled in Ontario in 1858. Around the beginning of the last century, Canada began actively encouraging Polish immigrants to come and settle our prairies in Western Canada. Thousands made the long journey in successive waves of immigration. According to the most recent census figures, some 800,000 Canadians claim Polish ancestry, roughly three percent of the population. As well, over 30,000 Poles visit Canada every year.

In addition to the close personal ties created by immigration, history has often brought Poles and Canadians together. When the Second World War broke out, Polish art treasures were sent to Canada for safekeeping. We fought side by side during that conflict and during the Gulf War. Today, our troops are working together in Afghanistan.

To support Poland's economic and political reforms, in 1989 Canada launched a program of technical cooperation. Managed by the Canadian International Development Agency, it has focused on the development of the private sector, the agriculture sector, and education and training.

Given the great strides Poland made, our program of aid ended when Poland joined the European Union in 2004. Today, rather than being a recipient of aid, Poland works with Canada to fund development projects in other countries.

Let us not forget Canadian-Poland trade relations. Last year, for the first time two-way trade surpassed one billion Canadian dollars – which is about 2.6 billion zlotych.⁽¹⁾ In addition, more and more Canadian firms are investing in Poland.

Visits such as this go a long way to building and reinforcing these ties between us. As parliamentarians, we will be called up on to make decisions regarding our common interests, and the more we know about Poland, the better we will be able to make informed decisions. At the same time, we are able to tell you about Canada's concerns and goals. By sharing such information, we help each other develop images of each other's country that are built on personal information, rather than second-hand knowledge.

On our return home, be assured that we will continue to follow developments in Poland. Thanks to the warm welcome we have received during our visit, we have a much better idea of the rapidly evolving situation here.

Ambassador Preston, on behalf of my colleagues, let me thank you once again for all the hard work you and your staff have done to make our visit a success.

Happy Canada Day!

Dziękuję bardzo (Zhe-koo'-yay bahrd'-zoh)

(1) Zlotych is the plural of zloty – the Polish currency.