

Speaking Notes
The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella
Speaker of the Senate

**On the occasion of a reception for the
Canadian Museum for Human Rights**

Ottawa, December 1, 2009

Mr. Murray,
Honourable Senators,
Members of the House of Commons,
Members of the Board of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights,
Ladies and gentleman,

Welcome to the Speaker's Chambers in the Senate of Canada. While these rooms are replete with items which most museums would covet, they might not fit in quite as well with the themes of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We have with us today a number of representatives of that museum, and I hope you will take this opportunity to discuss the progress which has been made and the objectives it seeks to achieve. In light of my own strong interest and background in human rights, I am very pleased to be hosting them today.

The museum represents a landmark for Canada, for the City of Winnipeg and particularly for the Asper Foundation. It will be Canada's fifth national museum and the first to be built outside the National Capital Region, although I would add that our sixth national museum was subsequently undertaken in Halifax.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights will be a living institution which will tell Canada's story regarding human rights. There are very few countries in the world where the practice of freedom and its attendant respect for human rights has enjoyed the same degree of success seen in Canada. That does not mean, however, that our historical record is spotless. Decisions were made that we have come to regret. Among them are the Chinese head tax, the Kamagata Maru, and the evacuation of Japanese Canadians.

The mission of the museum will be to explore the subject of human rights both in Canada and abroad, to enhance the public's understanding of human rights, to promote respect for others and to encourage reflection and dialogue. Education is one of the keys to avoiding further blots on our human rights record.

With us today is Gail Asper. I expect that all of you know her personally or by reputation. Ms. Asper is a director and corporate secretary of CanWest Global Communications Corp and is president of the CanWest Global Foundation. More importantly, in the context of today's event, she is President of The Asper Foundation, the private charitable foundation spearheading the establishment of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Ms. Asper is the daughter of entrepreneur and philanthropist Izzy Asper. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1981 and a Bachelor of Law degree in 1984 from the University of Manitoba. Called to the Nova Scotia bar in 1985, she is now a member of the Law Society of Manitoba. In 1989, she joined CanWest, as a corporate secretary and director.

She has long been associated with arts and culture as a volunteer, performer, and fundraiser. Ms. Asper has received numerous community service and humanitarian awards and was the 2005 recipient of the Governor-General Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts. In 2007, she was awarded the Order of Manitoba and a year later was made an Officer of the Order of Canada.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights has obviously been in very capable hands and I would now invite Ms. Asper to say a few words.