

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

ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF CHANUKAH

GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE CENTRE, OTTAWA  
DECEMBER 11, 2012

Your Excellency Ambassador Ziv,

Your Excellencies,

Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Erev tov. [Good evening]

It is a pleasure to join you this evening to mark the celebration of Chanukah and to bring warm best wishes from the Senate.

From December 9-16, 2012, the Festival of Lights, as Chanukah is also called, will be celebrated by members of the Jewish faith. This eight-day festival begins on the 25th of the month of Kislev in the Hebrew calendar, which varies from late November to late December in the Gregorian calendar, and continues till the 2nd of the month of Tevet.

The celebration arises from a story of what may have been the first time that people fought for religious freedom and thus for one of our important human rights. It is said that the Greek King of Syria forbade the observance of Judaism some 2300 years ago and compelled the worship of Greek gods.

A small, poorly-equipped Jewish force somehow managed to defeat a vastly larger army of experienced Greek fighters. The victors reclaimed the Temple

Mount and the Temple, only to find it had been damaged and had been used for profane purposes.

The final element in the rededication of the Temple after its purification was the lighting of the Menorah. Unfortunately, almost all of the holy oil had been defiled and only one jug of oil with the intact seal of the high priest remained. Sanctified oil was all that could be used for the purpose and a jug was sufficient to provide light for just one day, with eight days being required to produce an additional supply. Nevertheless, the Temple lamp was lighted and miraculously remained lit for the full eight days.

Chanukah is today observed by lighting one additional light of the Menorah on each of the eight holiday nights, finishing with all eight lights on the final night. The celebration has developed into a holiday with a rich historical underpinning, highlighting religious freedom and strong family ties.

These are certainly values shared by Canadians and it should also be noted in this context that Canada is home to the fourth largest Jewish community in the world, numbering more than 360,000. Canada has benefited tremendously from the presence of Jewish immigrants from the 1700's right through to the present day.

Among these immigrants to Canada were some 40,000 Holocaust survivors who also left an indelible mark on our culture and our institutions. Plans for the new Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Manitoba include a significant display on this subject.

In closing, I wish all those gathered here today and members of the Jewish faith around the world: "Chag Urim Sameach!" [Happy Festival of Lights!]