

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION HOSTED
BY THE AMBASSADOR OF CANADA TO COLOMBIA**

**BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA
17 JANUARY 2012**

Ambassador Martin,
Honourable parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of all members of our parliamentary delegation, I would like to thank Ambassador Martin for his warm welcome and for hosting this reception. It provides us with a wonderful opportunity to meet all of you. The staff here have worked diligently to make this reception and our visit a success and I want to commend them for their efforts.

Ambassador Martin, you have held many distinguished positions within the Canadian public service. Since beginning your career with the Canadian International Development Agency, you have gained invaluable experience with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in postings around the world, including in Addis Ababa, Ramallah, Nairobi, and Buenos Aires. Your experiences as former Ambassador to Argentina and Paraguay undoubtedly shaped your appreciation for Latin American culture – *y la lengua español* [and the Spanish language]. More recently you served as deputy head of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force and became the representative of Canada in Kandahar in 2010 – positions requiring immense courage and fortitude.

Relations between Canada and Colombia date back to the beginning of the nineteenth century when some Canadian businesses started investing in Colombian industry. This was well before Canada established full diplomatic relations with Colombia in 1953. In the 1920s, the Royal Bank of Canada was among the most important banks in Colombia helping to fund early oil exploration. Since then, bilateral trade between our countries has continued to expand with a significant number of Canadian companies becoming engaged in Colombia, primarily in the energy, mining and printing sectors.

The successful coming into force of the Canada–Colombia Free Trade Agreement is the latest example of the progress our two countries have made in the area of trade. By providing enhanced market access as well as greater stability, transparency and protection for investment, this agreement will help Canada and Colombia to further deepen their commercial and investment relations while creating new jobs and economic growth in both countries.

Our nations cooperate strongly at the trade level, but also work closely together on other issues, including human rights and the environment. The concurrent conclusion of the FTA and agreements on labour cooperation and the environment are indicative of a balanced relationship.

The progress our two countries have made in these areas is encouraging, and is the result of the hard work done by Canadian officials and business people, including many of you here tonight. The effort of the many Canadians who have worked tirelessly is to be commended, as well as those who continue to further strengthen the relationship between Canada and Colombia.

In closing, on behalf of all members of our delegation I would like to again thank Ambassador Martin for his gracious hospitality and propose a toast: Salud!