

SPEAKING NOTES
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A KINSELLA
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON FOR THE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF CROATIA

OTTAWA, DECEMBER 8, 2009

Minister Jandroković,
Ambassador Korac,
Honourable Senators and Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome to the Senate and to these magnificent rooms which are collectively called the Speaker's Chambers. I always enjoy showing them to visitors and particularly to drawing attention to the Latin inscriptions carved into the woodwork. Given the nature of the Senate, perhaps the most appropriate is *Nihil ordinatum est quod praecipitatur et properat* or "nothing that rushes headlong and is hurried is well ordered."

With this maxim in mind, I want to extend a warm welcome to both Minister Jandroković of Croatia and to Ambassador Korac. I have been fortunate to visit Croatia twice since becoming Speaker and have developed a strong interest in and a deep affection for the country and its people.

It was a particular pleasure to meet Minister Jandroković in 2006 when he was the Chair of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Croatian Parliament, and I am pleased that he was able to join us today in Ottawa. He has an impressive academic background which includes studies in politics, engineering, economics, and European and world affairs. Equally impressive is the good use he has made of his education: first in a successful career in the private sector and now as a prominent representative of Croatia.

During our Canadian delegation's visit in 2006, the Foreign Policy Committee of Croatia was examining Croatia's application to the EU and NATO and Croatia's relations with neighboring

countries, among other things. We had fruitful discussions on matters of international interest, trade, and education between our two countries, as well as possibilities for exchanges between our two countries' committees. I am pleased that we were able to continue that dialogue today.

Croatia has a rich and complex history. Although few Canadians realize it, ties between Croatia and Canada go back to the earliest days of European exploration in North America, with two sailors from Dalmatia accompanying French explorer Jacques Cartier on his third voyage to Canada in 1541. Croatians served in Austrian military units that helped defend New France in 1758. Croatians took part in the Klondike gold rush of the 1890s.

Most of the immigration from Croatia to Canada took place in the 20th century. About 12,000 arrived in the 1930s, and thousands more came after the end of the Second World War. Many of the early immigrants settled in remote mining and mill towns. More recently, Croatian immigrants have settled in our major cities, where they have become part of the Canadian mainstream. Today, Canada is home to a sizable Croatian community, numbering some 97,000 people including one of our Canadian Senators – the renowned former professional hockey player Frank Mahovlich.

Croatia itself has made great strides since declaring independence in 1991. Its parliamentary democracy has evolved and strengthened with time. Governmental institutions are more stable and responsive to its citizens. Human rights are better protected and the rule of law has ascended to its rightful place as the lone source of unbiased justice. The transformation has not always been easy but tremendous progress has been made in a relatively short span of time due to the work of people like Minister Jandroković.

Despite the great geographical distance between our countries, the challenges we face are not that different. We benefit from each others' experiences and we take away new perspectives on how to approach these challenges in the future. The bonds created by these personal ties are important, but much remains to be done to develop our trade and commercial relations, as well as the cultural and tourism links between our countries. Exchanges such as this give us the opportunity to learn about each other and to discuss our concerns in an informal atmosphere.

On behalf of my colleagues and in my own name, I wish to offer sincere congratulations to Minister Jandroković for his inspirational accomplishments and wish him great success in the future. Ziveli! (Zhi-vol-ee) To Life!