

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

**On the occasion of an official dinner hosted by
the Ambassador of Canada to the Czech Republic**

Prague
October, 2010

Ambassador Raymond,
Your Excellency Chairman Sobotka,
Honourable parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Allow me to begin by thanking our hostess, Ambassador Raymond, for her warm hospitality and for providing this opportunity to conclude the current series of interparliamentary meetings in a relaxed and congenial atmosphere. During the course of our productive and interesting meetings, issues of common concern and interest have been discussed and our understanding of one another has been enhanced. Our delegation also met with prominent members of Czech society to further strengthen the ties between our two countries.

Although our countries lie on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, Canada and the Czech Republic enjoy a long-standing and productive relationship. Our diplomatic ties, though interrupted for a brief period, go back over 80 years.

The friendship between our two countries is due in no small part to the more than 80,000 Canadians of Czech ancestry. The Canadian prairies became home to many Czech immigrants in the mid-1880s; others were welcomed as political refugees in the last century. These individuals contributed to making Canada a more vibrant and diverse country.

Over the last two decades, Canada and the Czech Republic have collaborated significantly in areas of mutual interest. In 2006, for example, our governments signed a Framework Agreement on Youth Mobility. This permits two

thousand young adults, half from the Czech Republic and half from Canada, to gain short-term employment, to complete internships and cooperative education work terms, and to participate in working holidays in each of our countries.

Academic relations have been strengthened in recent years through the establishment of two major Canadian Studies programs in universities in Prague and Brno. Notably, Canadian Studies programs in Central Europe are coordinated by Brno's Masaryk University.

The youth mobility and Canadian Studies programs strengthen our cultural ties. As our students learn about each other's countries, they build the foundations for greater understanding and cooperation.

Our countries also cooperate in numerous multilateral forums: the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Canada is very proud to have been the first to ratify the Czech Republic's membership in NATO.

In the context of Canada's bilateral relations with the European Union, our governments now also indirectly cooperate on issues including justice, foreign policy, defence, and security. Our trade and investment relationship is strong and growing, with the value of trade between our two countries reaching \$607.3 million in 2008. We hope that negotiations on a Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement will give a significant boost to bilateral economic relations. The formal negotiations for this Agreement were launched in Prague during the Czech Republic's Presidency of the European Council in May 2009.

In closing, I would like to thank Ambassador Raymond once again for her hospitality. On behalf of our delegation, I would also like to thank our Czech hosts for the wonderful hospitality we have enjoyed, and to express my hope that these interparliamentary meetings between Canada and the Czech Republic become a regular occurrence. I look forward to welcoming Czech delegations to Canada in the near future.