

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCH HOSTED  
BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CZECH SENATE**

**PRAGUE  
OCTOBER, 2010**

Your Excellency Chairman Sobotka,  
Honourable Parliamentarians,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me begin by thanking you, your Excellency, on behalf of the members of the delegation, for welcoming us to the beautiful city of Prague. In 2008, I had the honour of hosting his Excellency, the former Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek in Canada. My colleague, the Speaker of the House of Commons, led a delegation to the Czech Republic in 2005. It is a pleasure to be here and continue our tradition of Interparliamentary meetings.

These parliamentary exchanges strengthen ties between countries. Whether discussing long-standing concerns, shared interests or emerging issues, by meeting with each other we are able to identify problems and discuss mutually beneficial solutions. These meetings not only promote cooperation, they facilitate the exchange of knowledge between parliamentarians. There is no doubt that our delegations will learn from one another's experiences.

Our current visit gives the members of our delegation an opportunity to enhance our understanding of the challenges the Czech Republic and Central Europe face; it also allows us to further appreciate your many significant successes.

Over the past two decades, your country has made remarkable strides. Democratization and economic liberalization brought about important internal changes and altered the external orientation of your country.

Canada and the Czech Republic have enjoyed excellent relations throughout this transition. Between the years 1990 and 2004, Canada provided support to the Czech Republic through the Technical Assistance program. The aim of this program was to ease the transition from a managed economy to a market economy and to help the development of open and responsible government. Projects addressing issues such as good governance, private sector development, financial sector reform, and education were funded.

Since the end of this program in 2004, and in the context of the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union, the nature of the assistance changed dramatically as the Czech Republic developed its own international aid program. Through the Official Development Assistance in Central Europe (ODACE) program between 2004 and 2008, Canada and the Czech Republic supported efforts in third countries.

Our countries continue to enjoy excellent bilateral and multilateral relations. We cooperate in such multilateral forums as the World Trade Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), and the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE). Our countries have recently enjoyed more integrated economic relations as a result of trade negotiations with the European Union. Furthermore, we engage bilaterally at governmental, commercial, cultural, and, as this event highlights, parliamentary levels.

In closing, I would like to thank our Czech hosts, and Chairman Sobotka in particular, for their hospitality. Be assured that we will share with others the knowledge and insight gained during the course of our visit, and that we will follow events in the Czech Republic with renewed interest after our return home.

Na zdraví (to your health)!