

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

**FOURTH ANNUAL DIPLOMATIC SKI DAY**

**KINGSWAY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB**  
**JANUARY 30, 2010**

Speaker Milliken,  
Your Excellencies the Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Dr. Gary O'Brien, Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments,  
Honoured Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to welcome you as the Fourth Annual Diplomatic Ski Day comes to a conclusion. I would like to begin by thanking the Embassy of Slovenia, the Ottawa Diplomatic Association, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Office of Protocol, and the National Capital Commission for their hard work in making today's event such a success. The sponsors also played a tremendous role in making the skiing possible, and I would like to thank Audi, Tommy and Lefebvre, Camp Fortune, Mark Motors, and Elan Skis.

Speaker Milliken and I are hosting the reception and dinner which follow the awards ceremony, as an extension of this important day which gives us all such a wonderful opportunity to come together. As we get to know one another better in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere, personal connections are formed which are helpful in ensuring effective communications when needed. Of course, this particular day is also about appreciating the beauty of winter.

For many Canadians, skiing is an important part of the winter season, whether on the slopes or on the cross-country trails. There is plenty of fresh air and exercise, leading up to that most important social activity, the après ski. This generally takes place at the end of the day and typically involves gathering in a lodge with skiing partners, perhaps beside a roaring fire with a warming drink in one's hand, discussing the adventures of the day.

Skiing is a sport and an activity which offers something for everyone. Younger people tend to gravitate towards the speed and excitement of the slopes. There is also the more recent variation of the snowboard, which lends itself to fancy manoeuvres and gravity-defying tricks.

Those with a calmer disposition may prefer cross-country treks. Out on the forest trails, cross-country skiers can enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the snow-covered trees. Snowshoes provide either a slower pace or a better workout, or both.

The nature of the outdoor activity doesn't matter all that much, whether it is skiing, tobogganing, snowshoeing, skating, or simply walking through the snow. Finding ways to get out and enjoy winter is what is important.

In many ways, Canadians are defined by winter. Although the French philosopher Voltaire famously dismissed Canada as “quelques arpents de neige” – a few acres of snow – the fact is that Canadians not only survive in this climate, we thrive in it. Other countries with similar weather conditions have a similar view.

Winter festivals are one way in which we celebrate winter. These include the famous Carnaval de Québec, Ottawa’s Winterlude, and Calgary’s Winterfest, along with many other smaller festivals in towns across the country.

This year Canada is hosting the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, British Columbia. This is only the second time we have hosted the winter games – in 1988 they were held in Calgary, Alberta.

Our winter Olympic athletes are treated as heroes by Canadians from coast to coast. I am pleased to say that one of those heroes, the Honourable Nancy Greene Raine, is now a Senator. She won gold and silver medals for her downhill skiing exploits during the 1968 Olympics. This year, she is Canada’s Olympic Ambassador.

Although I don’t think anyone set Olympic records here today, everyone had the chance to experience some of the thrills – and spills – that make skiing such a popular winter sport. Our awards ceremony will begin shortly, but I think you will agree that after a day like today, everyone is a winner.

In closing, I would like to thank you all once again for joining in the activities, including this all-important après ski. A day in good company gaining a greater appreciation of winter and all that it has to offer is, I hope you’ll agree, a day well spent.