

Speaking Notes
Reception for Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians

MAY 12, 2008

Colleagues,

I want to begin by saying a few words about our outgoing Chair and President, Doug Rowland. He has been a volunteer in this position since 2003 and has overseen many significant developments and improvements in the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, including the founding of the International Election Monitors Institute and the expansion of our Schools and Universities educational programs. He has done yeoman's work and I also want to thank his wife, Helen, for putting up with this infringement on their time together. I know we all appreciate his considerable efforts over the last 5 years.

Today we are welcoming the Senate's recently retired Usher of the Black Rod, Terrance Christopher OMM, LVO, CD, as an honorary member of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians. I am pleased to say that his induction into our ranks was the outcome of a unanimous vote. For an individual who spent only a little more than five years in service to Parliament, in a non-representative role, this extraordinary and unprecedented gesture speaks volumes.

It speaks to our regard for Terry Christopher's work ethic and his careful attention to his duties to all members of Parliament, both in the Senate and the House of Commons. It speaks to the value to be found in a lifetime of service. It speaks, in short, to the very core of our organization; the importance we place on that kind of public service.

That we have chosen Terry Christopher for this distinction is no surprise. In an environment that prides itself on professional service to parliamentarians, he has somehow managed to stand out. Perhaps it is the very public nature of his role that has made him so prominent in our minds, or perhaps it is something more.

The ebony cane from which the Usher takes his title is a symbol of the Black Rod's position as the Crown's messenger. Embedded in the base of the cane is a gold sovereign. There was a tradition that a new gold sovereign would be installed when a new Usher of the Black Rod was appointed, and that the retiring Black Rod would receive the one which had been in the base. The gold sovereign currently in the base is dated 1904, but the tradition has been revived to the extent that Terry Christopher was presented with a gold sovereign from 2002 upon his retirement.

The richness of the ceremony and symbolism that imbues the functions of the Usher of the Black Rod was not lost on our former Black Rod. As the 14th holder of the position in the Canadian Parliament, he was always careful to ensure that the dignity of the office and the role he played were well understood. He was a champion for the recognition due this ancient and storied position. Our choice to include Terry Christopher as an honorary member is, in part, a testament to his success.

On behalf of all of us gathered here today, I want to thank you and congratulate you on a lifetime in the service of our nation, and at the same time welcome you as an honorary member of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians.

I would now ask Mr. Christopher and Speaker Milliken to join me for the presentation.