

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

ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION FOR A DELEGATION FROM THE
ASSOCIATION INTERPARLEMENTAIRE CANADA-FRANCE

SPEAKER'S CHAMBERS
DECEMBER 10, 2012

Madame Coutelle,
Senator Tardif,
Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,
Distinguished guests,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Parliament and to the chambers of the Speaker of the Senate, where we are gathered to welcome Madame Catherine Coutelle, députéé, présidente de l'Association interparlementaire France Canada, and the members of her delegation.

These rooms are those of Her Majesty when she is on Parliament Hill and have a number of features of historical significance and of general interest. I will draw your attention to just one, namely the inscriptions carved in the woodwork in Latin above the doors at each end of the room. A personal favourite is "Sapere Aude" or "Dare to be Wise" taken from the work of the poet Horace. This is particularly appropriate in a parliamentary setting.

Madame Coutelle, before your first election to the National Assembly in 2007, you had a distinguished career with the Conseil municipal de Poitiers (Vienne) spanning some 24 years, and serving as Deputy Mayor for much of that time. It seems to have provided a good foundation for your subsequent work and your wide ranging interests. These include economic affairs, women's rights, public-private partnerships, foreign affairs, energy and communications.

Your visit to Canada provides an opportunity to continue the dialogue on these and other subjects. Last month, you will recall that I had the privilege of leading a parliamentary delegation to France where our discussions on the benefits of international youth exchanges were of particular interest. The warm hospitality of the France-Canada Interparliamentary Association at that time was greatly appreciated.

In today's environment of increased interdependence, democratisation, global challenges and multiplication of communications, interparliamentary relations have heightened importance and profile.

The additional channels of communication offered through parliamentary diplomacy provide a complementary tool to traditional diplomacy on sensitive issues. Our ability to speak freely on issues with our foreign counterparts helps to foster understanding, building networks and trusting relationships. In some cases, the interpersonal connections created through these interactions contribute to easing inter-state tensions.

I now call on Madame Coutelle to share a few words with us, perhaps including a few comments on her perspective of the political changes in France following last spring's presidential and legislative elections.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Madame Coutelle and the delegation from the National Assembly of France.

Cheers!