

NOTES FOR A TOAST GIVEN BY
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA,
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE
AT A DINNER HOSTED BY
THE SPEAKER OF THE ROMANIAN SENATE,
THE HONOURABLE MIRCEA GEOANA

MAY 18, 2009

President Geoana,
Mrs. Geoana,
Fellow Parliamentarians,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I rise to thank you for hosting this wonderful dinner. On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to extend our thanks to you all for warmly and graciously welcoming us to your beautiful country.

I would also like to personally thank President Geoana for hosting this event tonight. Your long experience in public life – as a diplomat, an Ambassador, a Minister, and now as President of the Senate – is something to be very proud of. We thank you for taking the time to share your experience in public life with us as we learn about Romania and its Parliament.

My predecessor, the Honourable Daniel Hays, visited your country in 2005, and commented about what a pleasure it was to meet with Romanian parliamentarians. It is an honour for me to be able to continue these exchanges.

There is a strong personal connection between our two countries. Romanians first arrived in Canada in the late 19th Century, when many migrated to Canada's western provinces to begin life as prairie farmers. Canada remembers fondly the impact that people of Romanian origin had on our development as a country. Statistics demonstrate that the people-to-people connections between our two countries remain strong today, thanks to over 190,000 Canadians of Romanian origin that live in Canada.

Despite the long distance that separates our two countries, Canadians have always been interested in learning about Romania. We watched with fascination at the dramatic events that transpired after 1989, and we have been impressed by the speed at which change has occurred since then.

A prime example of this change is the rapid economic ties that have developed between Canada and Romania. Beginning with modest economic relations only ten years ago, we are proud to say that today Romania is Canada's largest trading partner in Southeastern Europe. This is an impressive achievement in such a short period of time.

Yet the relationship that exists between our two countries extends beyond the economic and trade domains. Our relationship is built on a foundation

of mutual interests and shared goals. A perfect example of these shared goals is the commitment that both our countries have to participating in multilateral institutions.

You have made multilateralism a priority of your foreign policy. This is a priority that Canada shares. As a founding member of NATO, we were strong supporters of your successful bid to join the organization in 2004. Canada was also pleased by your accession to full EU member status in 2007. Through collaboration with other countries, Canada has long believed that these kinds of organizations are the best vehicles to promote stability and order in the world.

While the foundation for a successful relationship between Canada and Romania is in place, we should recognize that our work is not yet done. Particularly during this time of economic downturn it is important that our two countries work hard to ensure that our trade relationship remains strong.

Parliamentary exchanges such as these provide a forum in which our two countries can engage openly with each other to find solutions to difficult problems. They also provide an opportunity for our countries to build on our relationship, and offer mutual support to each other in our work as

parliamentarians. I am certain that over the coming days, our meetings will provide just such an opportunity.

In closing, let me thank you all once again for warmly welcoming us to your beautiful country. I look forward to the positive and productive discussions that I know will occur in the days ahead.