

**SPEAKING NOTES
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SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**AT A RECEPTION MARKING THE RETIREMENT OF
SENATOR GRAFSTEIN**

DECEMBER 9, 2009

Senator Grafstein,
Honourable Senators and Members of Parliament,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Welcome to the Speaker's Chambers, where we are gathered to celebrate the brief Senate career of the Honourable Jeremiah Grafstein. It is a career which will be a full 11 days short of 26 years, when his birthday on January 2 brings it to a close.

Those who have had the pleasure of making Senator Grafstein's acquaintance will know that his retirement from politics is by no means an exit from public engagement. As he himself has put it, "get ready for my next act."

His energy, charisma and tireless commitment to fundamental human rights and freedoms, including democracy, will be sorely missed in the Senate. Although we mourn his departure, this is not a wake. This is an opportunity to honour him and to thank him as we recall and celebrate his accomplishments as a parliamentarian.

Few senators have been as active in terms of legislative pursuits as Senator Grafstein. Of the 35 private bills currently before the Senate, he is the author of five, three of which are in committee. It is a tribute to the flexibility and dexterity of his intellect that he has taken an interest in such a large number of disparate policy fields, understanding them from top to bottom. He was the best friend of many measures, and an implacable foe of others.

One special interest, which he will certainly continue to pursue long after he leaves the Senate, is Canada's relationship with the United States. Senator Grafstein is an unbelievably strong proponent, and has worked ceaselessly to deepen our close ties with our American counterparts. He has already been well recognized for his work in this area, being the worthy recipient of praise and honours.

Senator Grafstein has applied his diplomatic skills to the collective defence and security of this country and that of our international partners. His interests have embraced improvements to

Canada's financial system, improvements to the environmental integrity of our watersheds and the preservation of clean drinking water for future generations. An ardent champion and supporter of the nourishing role played by art and culture in Canada, Canadians across the country have him to thank for the creation of the position of Canada's poet laureate.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of Senator Grafstein's approach to life is that he not only talks the talk in matters that interest him, he walks the walk. For example, while he talks about honouring philanthropy in Canada, he also selflessly gives of his material resources, his intellectual expertise and his time.

Senator Grafstein has been guided by an uncompromising sense of what is wrong and what is right, and has consistently shown a willingness to act according to these principles. This is an essential characteristic of a great parliamentarian and of parliamentary debate itself. Disagreements arise in debate, but beneath the disagreement lies respect for one another.

In closing, I want to thank Senator Grafstein for his hard work and dedication to the Senate and wish him the very best in the future. There is no doubt that he will continue to be active and will devote his array of talents to the benefit of many Canadians. With that, I invite him to say a few words.