

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF
A VISITING DELEGATION FROM GREECE**

**SPEAKER'S DINING ROOM
28 MAY 2013**

Your Excellency President Meimarakis,

Your Excellencies, the Members of the diplomatic corps,

Honourable parliamentarians,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen:

“Kalispera” (Good afternoon),

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Senate and to these historic rooms for this luncheon in honour of the parliamentary delegation from Greece. This is a relatively informal gathering, giving us the opportunity to reflect on your visit to Canada thus far in a relaxed and congenial atmosphere.

President Meimarakis, it is a particular pleasure to see you again so soon. You will recall that I had the privilege of leading a parliamentary delegation to Greece this past September. You kindly took time from your busy schedule to meet with us and share your perspective on recent developments in Greece. I am grateful for the opportunity to repay the “filoxenia” (hospitality), or generosity of spirit, we were so fortunate to experience during our stay in your beautiful country.

Our time in Greece was a fascinating and productive one. By immersing ourselves in the Greek culture, and through our meetings with Greek officials, we were able to further our understanding of the situation in Greece and identify

opportunities for increased cooperation. While meeting with representatives from Greece's business community, the warmth and genuine enthusiasm of the Greek people left us with lasting impressions. Our discussions in Rhodes and Athens were positive and inspired, and I can say with certainty that our delegation developed a strong affection for your country and your people.

During the 127th Assembly of the Inter-parliamentary Union held in Québec City, Canada and Greece honoured our bilateral ties by celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations. In 1942, Canada appointed Major-General Georges Vanier, who would later become Governor General of Canada, the first Canadian to present credentials to the Government of Greece in exile. That same year, the Hellenic Republic opened its first diplomatic mission in Ottawa. More recently, demonstrated commitments to human rights, international peace and security, and the principles of democracy are mutual characteristics that have enabled our relationship to flourish.

At a time when youth unemployment has reached unprecedented levels around the world, our two countries have remained focused on creating a better future for younger generations. The Canada–Greece Youth Mobility Agreement – recently ratified by the Hellenic Parliament and signed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper while visiting Athens in 2011 – is evidence of this fact. The agreement will make it easier for young Canadians and Greeks to travel and work in each other's country and demonstrates a forward-looking approach to job creation and growth. It also displays a commitment to ensuring that our relationship remains on a solid foundation of cooperation and understanding, and that it will stand the test of time.

Of course, parliamentary exchanges such as this play an integral role in forging bonds between countries. It is important that parliamentarians from both Canada and Greece continue to work together in the spirit of openness, cooperation and ongoing dialogue as our relationship continues to evolve.

In closing, on behalf of the Senate of Canada, I would like to raise a toast to our visitors from Greece. I wish you a pleasant stay in our nation's capital and a safe journey to Toronto, Québec City, and Montreal.

Santé, Cheers and “*yia mas*” (pronounced *yammas*) (meaning “to our health”).