

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION IN HONOUR OF HIS
EXCELLENCY DIMITRIS L. AVRAMOPOULOS, MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC**

**SPEAKER'S DINING ROOM, OTTAWA
FEBRUARY 26, 2013**

Your Excellency Minister Avramopoulos,
Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean,
Ambassador,
Ministers,
Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

“Kalispera” (Good evening)!

Kèerie Eepouryè, Kalós èèrthate ston Kanatha ke sto Keenovoúlió mas.
(Minister, welcome to Canada and our Parliament.)

Hièrome pára polèè pou sas ksnavlèpo. (I am very pleased to see you
again.)

It is a pleasure to welcome all of you to the Speaker's Dining Room and to
Parliament, particularly our honoured guest, Minister Avramopoulos, Minister of
Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

Minister, I am delighted to see you again so soon, having had the good
fortune to meet in September 2012 when our Canadian delegation visited Greece.
Another recent international connection between our countries occurred when

Canadian and Greek officials met during the 127th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Québec City in October. We have built on this momentum, and continue to use every opportunity to reinforce our special friendship.

Your visit comes at what is often a particularly cold time of year in our nation's capital – the height of the winter season – but today's temperatures are considered to be fairly mild. While you will find the city of Ottawa much changed from your previous visit this past October, it gives you the opportunity to take in some uniquely Canadian attractions. I hope that you will take the opportunity to experience some favourite Canadian winter activities such as skiing, watching a hockey game, or perhaps even skating on the Rideau Canal – the world's largest skating rink.

Our two countries recently reached an important milestone. During the 127th IPU Assembly, we celebrated 70 years of diplomatic relations between Canada and Greece. In 1942, Canada appointed Major-General Georges Vanier, who later became 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 have enabled our relationship to flourish.

This high level of collaboration is evident through our multilateral interactions at the United Nations, NATO, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and la *Francophonie*. Our two countries also share education cooperation arrangements, and the Hellenic Parliament recently ratified the

bilateral Youth Mobility Agreement (YMA) signed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper while visiting Athens in 2011.

Ours is a bilateral relationship worth celebrating. To commemorate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations, the Canadian Embassy in Greece and the historic Benaki Museum in Athens restored a full-scale totem pole. Hailing from Canada's Pacific Northwest Coast, the totem pole was originally presented as a gift to the Canadian Embassy in Athens in the early 1970s, but suffered extensive damage due to erosion. Canadian conservator Andrew Todd restored this important monument with support from the Benaki Museum, the Centre for Hellenic Studies at Simon Fraser University, the Hellenic community in Vancouver and the Visual Arts Collection Program at Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

Today this totem pole, called the "Chief's Crest Pole" is on display at the Benaki museum. It stands, newly restored but ever-enduring, not only as a symbol of Canadian multicultural heritage, but also as a reflection of the Canada-Greece relationship. Though the storms will come and the weather may change, bonds such as ours - forged on a solid foundation of cooperation and understanding - will stand the test of time.

In closing, I wish to thank our Greek visitors for joining us here tonight and propose a toast to their good health and to the future of Canada-Greece relations.

Santé, Cheers and "*Stin iyia mas*" (pronounced: yamas) (meaning "to our health").