

Address of His Excellency François Hollande, President of the French Republic, to both Houses of Parliament in the House of Commons Chamber

Ottawa, Monday, November 3, 2014

Hon. Noël A. Kinsella (Speaker of the Senate):

Speaker Scheer, Your Excellency President Hollande, Mr. Prime Minister, honourable senators and members, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of everyone gathered here today for this joint session of Canada's Parliament, I am honoured to thank you, Mr. President, for your speech.

Your thoughts and remarks highlighted the friendship that binds our two countries so closely. Before entering Parliament, you participated in a ceremony to lay a bouquet of flowers at the National War Memorial. I want you to know that we appreciate your support, Mr. President, in the wake of the tragic events that occurred in this very place on October 22.

Canada truly appreciates your condemnation of such a reprehensible terrorist act in this democratic institution. Canada is determined to maintain its commitment to the international coalition against the Islamic State. Thank you, Mr. President, for your remarks and your good advice.

Beyond issues of security and the fight against terrorism, Canada and France have opportunities to cooperate on many common causes. The contribution made by veterans to our history and heritage is one example. Remembrance Day is next week. The Senate of Canada is hosting a symposium called "Canada and France in the Great War 1914-1918", which will allow participants to reflect on the significance and consequences of that historic time for both of our nations.

As part of the activities to commemorate the Great War, the Parliament of Canada was supposed to welcome a delegation from the City of Arras on October 22. I had a meeting scheduled that day with the mayor, His Worship Frédéric Leturque, and the members accompanying him. The sudden, dramatic events that unfolded that day meant that they were not able to come to Parliament Hill.

Mr. President, Canada and France share a number of deep historic and cultural ties, but the City of Arras is of special significance to Canadians, particularly this year as we mark the centenary of the Great War. I am extremely proud every time we have visitors in our chamber and we tell them the story of the painting by Canadian artist James Kerr-Lawson that hangs in the Senate. The painting illustrates the ruins of the cathedral in Arras as they were in 1917. It is part of a collection of eight paintings commemorating Canada's participation in the First World War, including one depicting the arrival of the Canadian soldiers in Saint-Nazaire.

The historic ties shared by our two countries are represented in the Senate chamber by a number of symbols, including a stone sculpture of Joan of Arc and many depictions of the fleur-de-lys, which can also be found on Canada's coat of arms.

Thank you, Mr. President, for reaffirming, through your presence here today and your remarks, the history and the friendship that unite Canada and France.