

Speaking Notes
The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella
Speaker of the Senate of Canada

On the occasion of a literary celebration of the book
The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger

Speaker's Dining Room, Ottawa
Tuesday, 5 November 2013

Professor Unger,

Ms. Gammon,

Mr. Allen,

Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Parliament and to the Speaker's Chambers this evening, where we are gathered for a literary celebration of a book authored by Professor Unger and Ms. Gammon entitled *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger*.

This collaborative effort about the life of Israel Unger helps to fill in the details of an important gap in our understanding of the lives of survivors of the Holocaust following the end of the Second World War. It begins with a remarkable tale of nine people hiding in an attic crawl space, reminiscent of the Diary of Anne Frank, and continues on to cover their precarious situation even after they were able to leave those narrow confines.

Veterans Week begins today, bringing to the forefront the efforts of the brave men and women who made their survival possible. The book which is the

subject of our gathering this evening shows that the end of the war did not by itself resolve all the problems. The importance of books of this nature is that they help to provide additional historical context, giving us a better understanding of the events of the day and of the era itself.

As you look around this room, you will find many reminders and symbols of our history. These range from the teak and ebony flooring, reminiscent of the deck of a ship, to the paintings of our naval vessels, right to the top of the walls where you will see plaster carvings which incorporate the armorial bearings of our first 12 Governors General.

One of my favourite features lies in the epigraphs carved in the wood at each end of the room, which was a common decorative tradition of the Tudor great hall. The maxims catch the eye and mind of visitors. The one on the south wall comes from the work of the Roman poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus, more commonly referred to as simply Horace. “Sapere aude”, for those whose Latin may be a bit rusty, has been translated as “dare to be wise.”

There have been many and varied interpretations, but in the context in which it was written, it was an exhortation to begin immediately rather than putting things off until perhaps too late. We are fortunate that Ms. Gammon was able to prevail upon Israel Unger to share his story with us.

Ms. Gammon has a considerable body of work to her credit, including poems, prose and essays which have appeared in a range of publications. This includes a co-authored book entitled *Johanna Krause, Twice Persecuted, Surviving in Nazi Germany and Communist East Germany*. Born and educated in Fredericton in my home province of New Brunswick, she has a long and deep interest in the Holocaust and its survivors.

Born in Poland, Professor Unger made his way to Canada in 1951 and made his home in Fredericton. He taught at the University of New Brunswick and served three terms as Dean of Science. It appears that his welcome there will never wear out, as the title of Dean Emeritus was conferred on him in 1999. He has been very active in the Jewish community and in November 2010 Israel Unger was the recipient of the inaugural John Peters Humphrey award for Human Rights.

The Honourable Keith Ashfield, Member of Parliament for Fredericton, is the co-host of this literary celebration, but he was unfortunately not able to join us in person this evening. Mike Allen, Member of Parliament for the New Brunswick riding of Tobique-Mactaquac, kindly agreed to bring greetings on behalf of Keith. Please join me in welcoming Mike Allen to the podium.

Closing Remarks

Thank you Professor Unger and Ms. Gammon for joining us. Everyone is most appreciative of your comments and this evening's gathering has certainly contributed to our understanding of events. I hope you will all take a moment to look at their book, limited copies of which are available tonight.

Thank you all for coming.