

NOTES FOR A TOAST GIVEN BY
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA,
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE
ON THE OCCASION OF A DINNER
HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, BLAZ
KAVCIC

MAY 21, 2009

President Kavcic,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all, on behalf of my colleagues, let me express my appreciation for the warm welcome that we have received since we have arrived in your beautiful country. We are very pleased to be here with you tonight.

Let me also express my appreciation to Mr. Blaz Kavcic for hosting this wonderful event. Your experience as a businessman, an entrepreneur, a member of the National Assembly, and now as the President of the National Council, has been of tremendous value to your country. Your experiences will also be very valuable to us as we learn about Slovenia and its Parliament.

Parliamentary delegations from Canada and Slovenia have had the pleasure to meet on several occasions over the past few years, and it is an honour to be able to continue the tradition of parliamentary exchanges between our

countries today. In 2005, a delegation led by the Canadian Speaker of the House of Commons visited Slovenia, and in 2007, a delegation from the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association also had the pleasure to visit your country. The following year, Canada was honoured to welcome parliamentarians from Slovenia to our country. These visits are indicative of the strong relations that have developed between our countries over the past number of years.

While many Canadians may not be aware of it, Canada and Slovenia have had excellent diplomatic relations since your country's independence in 1991. In 1992, our countries established diplomatic relations, and over the past 16 years our relationship has expanded significantly.

Slovenian parliamentarians have played a large role in the development of relations between our countries. Since independence, you have worked to create a stable, multi-party parliamentary democracy based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, and tolerance of differences. This work has not gone unnoticed by Canadian parliamentarians, and it has been a main reason why our countries maintain such a cooperative relationship today.

These same factors – respect for human rights and democracy – have made Slovenia an important Canadian ally on the international stage. Canada

supported your integration into the international community. As members of NATO and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Security in Europe, Canada and Slovenia have partnered in the pursuit of international peace and security and the rule of law.

Canada has in particular applauded Slovenia's support for the Ottawa landmine treaty. You have made de-mining and assisting victims of land mines a key priority of your foreign policy, and in doing so, you have become a leader on landmine-control initiatives.

Canada would also like to express its appreciation for the work that Slovenia's armed forces are doing in Afghanistan. Like Slovenia, Canada is actively involved in Afghanistan. On behalf of all Canadians, I would like to express our gratitude for the professionalism and dedication that that your country's troops have shown while participating in the NATO-led mission.

Canada shares your commitment to multilateralism. Like you, we recognize that by working together on issues of mutual interest, our likelihood of making progress on key international issues is significantly enhanced.

While the relationship between our countries is strong, we should recognize that there are many opportunities still not yet seized. It is for this reason that opportunities to share ideas and network are so important both to our work as parliamentarians and to our country's relationship more generally.

Let me close by once again thanking you for welcoming us here tonight. I hope that we will have the chance to continue these exchanges in the future, and I look forward to what I know will be productive conversations ahead.