

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION CELEBRATING
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF L'ARCHE**

**ROOM 256-S, CENTRE BLOCK
NOVEMBER 10, 2014**

President Rietschlin,

Ms. Card,

National and Regional Leaders, Assistants and Core Members of
L'Arche Canada,

Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen:

Greetings and welcome to the Parliament of Canada, where it is our pleasure to have you join us today in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of L'Arche. Since 1964, your organization has created homes and day programs where people with and without intellectual disabilities can thrive together, learn from each other, and nourish our human needs for contribution, dignity, and belonging.

Although L'Arche is a large family, with 140 communities in 40 countries, the Canadian side of that family is particularly noteworthy. Through its 29 communities from Cape Breton to Vancouver Island, its homes, workshops, leadership training, educational materials and

awareness initiatives have benefitted countless Canadians, their families and neighbourhoods. As a Senator for New Brunswick, I am pleased to note that L'Arche has a strong presence through McKim House in my own hometown of Saint John, New Brunswick.

It is unsurprising that L'Arche would flourish in our country. Its mission represents the best and truest of what it means to be Canadian: to value and respect others, to embrace differences, and to focus not on challenges but rather on abilities and the desire to contribute. We are joined today by leaders of several faith traditions, representing the diverse fabric of our country, and who each provide an important voice in their respective communities for these universal values.

This occasion holds a personal significance. In the winter of 1965, while researching my doctoral dissertation in sacred theology at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, I travelled to the Oise region of France and visited L'Arche's founding town of Trosly-Breuil, which already had become known for Mr. Vanier's pioneering work. The resulting thesis defended the inherent dignity and spiritual integrity of all persons with and without intellectual disabilities. Those words and ideas have been truly lived and exemplified by the members of L'Arche communities over these past fifty years.

Last year, it was my pleasure to host a reception here at Parliament for the launch of a book detailing the life and accomplishments of a key contributor to L'Arche Canada, Mr. Henri Nouwen. We learned that day

about the deep fulfilment he found in his final years working with Core Members. It is an experience which many of those here know first-hand.

At this time of year, Canadians across the country and of all backgrounds are united in remembering those who gave their lives in defending the values we hold so dear, particularly in the First and Second World Wars. It is fitting that we have an opportunity today to learn from Core Members of L'Arche about some interesting connections between that history and the story of L'Arche.

There are no guarantees that anything we do will matter in fifty years, let alone be cause for celebrations at Rideau Hall and Parliament, such as L'Arche is holding this week. But our best bet – indeed, the only bet worth making – is that giving and being good to others will likely create as profound and lasting a legacy as any. That is the fifty-year gift of L'Arche to Canada, and we are grateful in advance for fifty years more.

Thank you.