Speech for the Opening of the Library of Parliament
Speaker Noël A. Kinsella
May 30, 2006

Mr. Speaker,
Minister,
Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons,
Mesdames et Monsieurs,

This morning we celebrate the completion of the renovation work that has successfully renewed a centre piece of Parliament Hill – The Library of Parliament.

On behalf of the Senate of Canada and all Honourable Senators I wish to commend and congratulate all who worked on the successful rehabilitation of this national treasure.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, it was in 1867, the year of Confederation that the Library of Parliament was officially established, then based on collections from the legislative libraries of Lower and Upper Canada (1791-1841) and the Province of Canada (1841-1867). During the past 139 years the Library of Parliament has become far more than a repository for the story of Canada, but rather has grown to be both a functional parliamentary working environment and a monumental symbol which speaks to the practice of Freedom in Canada.

The Library of Parliament plays an active role in informing, interpreting, guiding and educating Canadians about their Parliament, incorporating modern techniques and tools, while providing a true sense of our heritage and traditions.

For Parliamentarians especially, it is also a primary source of knowledge and insight, a centre of innovative and authoritative research and expression. And the people at the Library are what make it stand out for us, as Parliamentarians.

The researchers, librarians and specialists who work here are highly reputed among their own academic and professional circles for their depth of their expertise and their qualities of excellence. It is often their wisdom and experience that is behind the studies, briefings, legislation and initiative that eventually emanate from Senators and Members of the House of Commons.

Yet the dedicated professionals who work in the Library of Parliament are the epitome of the backroom people. They rarely receive the recognition and public awareness they so richly deserve for their vital intellectual contributions to the work of our two Houses of Parliament.

I also know that is the way the professionals in our Library of Parliament want it. While the accolades of peers are gratifying, public profile is not what these uniquely talented people seek. Rather the excellence of the work and, hopefully, the effectiveness of the result is their reward.

So the kind of investment Canadians have made in renovating the Library of Parliament would be worthwhile, if only from the perspective of preserving our national monuments and heritage. But it is even more meaningful when we realize that this investment is much more than honoring our past.

When the original building here was constructed we did not have electricity. Now we need to be globally connected and prepared to share an infinite amount of instant knowledge. The Library of Parliament is a vibrant, modern, working institution. These renovations will empower this workplace to keep pace with the demands of our increasingly complex society, as well respecting and celebrating our roots and traditions.

On the re-opening of this newly renovated facility for the Library of Parliament and as Speaker of the Senate, I want to gratefully acknowledge its people's crucial contribution to Canada's government and governance and express my sincere hope that the renovated space will serve them well.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to conclude by returning to the observation that this magnificent and historic part of our Parliamentary Precinct is a monument that also celebrates the building of the great Canadian Parliamentary institution. Indeed, I would like to suggest that as we visit this Monument of Freedom and seek to touch Canadian liberty, that we think of those near classical words on the tomb of Christopher Wren, the architect of St Paul's in London:

"si monumentum requiris, circumspice"

In the Library of Parliament, if we seek to see and touch the practice of Canadian Feedom, let us look around.