

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF THE
HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA HOSTED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY GJORGE IVANOV, PRESIDENT OF MACEDONIA**

SEPTEMBER 6, 2013

President Ivanov,
Distinguished guests,

On behalf of my colleagues, may I tell you how pleased we are to be here in the Republic of Macedonia, and to thank you for your warm welcome and gracious hospitality.

President Ivanov, we last met this past April in Ottawa. It was a great pleasure to meet with you then, but it is outstanding to have the opportunity to meet with you here this evening, in beautiful Ohrid. This city is unlike any other, with its breath-taking natural beauty and also its historic and cultural significance. We will not soon forget the sights we saw today and we thank you for your kind invitation.

President Ivanov, I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with us here this evening. Mr. President, your experience in Macedonian politics, academia, and public life is very impressive. Prior to entering politics, your experience as a scholar of political history and philosophy, together with your research on building democracies in divided societies were undoubtedly important in Macedonia's early years as an independent state, and continue to be relevant today. You introduced innovative teaching methods to Macedonian universities, and you were among the first Macedonian academics to introduce systematic research in Macedonian academia.

Following your election as President in 2009, it is clear that your dedication to democracy remains strong. You have endeavoured to improve relations with Greece. Another example of your strong commitment to democratic principles and international peace is your participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and the Membership Action Plan. Lastly, as a key contributor to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, the world has noted your support over the past decade. Canada continues to be a strong supporter of Macedonia's membership to NATO. Managing the international environment has not been an easy matter and Canadians remain convinced that NATO membership for Macedonia would both strengthen the Alliance and enhance regional stability.

Bilateral relations between our two countries are strong, and visits of this nature undoubtedly make them stronger. Every year we see millions of dollars' worth of goods exchanged between our countries. Furthermore, since the Republic of Macedonia gained its independence in 1991, Canada has been working with the government to nurture political and economic reform in Macedonia. To that end, Canada has supported initiatives that promote human rights, democratic development, good governance, respect for the rule of law and capacity-building in the public sector. Our most recent census also told us that nearly 10,000 Canadians hail from Macedonia, bringing your vibrant and proud culture to Canadian cities and towns.

Over the last few days, we have seen some of the beauty this country has to offer. We have also taken note of how welcoming Macedonians are and feel like we are among friends. Upon returning to Canada, we will relay your ideas, successes and challenges back to our colleagues, and keep a watchful eye on developments in your Parliament.

On behalf of the Senate of Canada, I would like to raise a toast to continuing strong ties between Canada and Macedonia.

Cheers!