

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

On the occasion of a Luncheon for the Prime Minister of Macedonia
Thursday, August 27, 2009

Your Excellency Prime Minister GRUEVSKI,
Minister MILOSOSKI,
Speaker MILLIKEN,
Minister LeBRETON,
Mrs. DIMOVSKA,
Ambassador MORRISON,
Distinguished guests:

Добар ден!/dóbar den/ – Good afternoon

Welcome to the Senate. I would like to begin by thanking our Macedonian guests for making the long journey to come and visit us.

Prime Minister Gruevski, it is a particular honour to meet you. With your long experience in Macedonian public life, you are able to bring us up to date about recent developments in your country. Your visit provides an opportunity for us to discuss our many areas of common interest.

The ties between the Republic of Macedonia and Canada are helped in large measure by the presence of a significant Macedonian community in Canada. Its first members arrived early in the last century and settled in the Toronto area. Since then, the community has flourished. Although our last census in 2006 showed approximately 37,000 people who claimed Macedonian origins, other estimates suggest that there are actually over 100,000.

Many of the early Macedonian immigrants found work in factories. Once established, however, they began opening businesses, including restaurants and grocery stores. Today, many of their children and grandchildren work as professionals. Those who came to Canada from Macedonia have become part of mainstream Canadian life, but even so, they have kept their cultural heritage alive through various associations, churches, and newspapers and radio programs.

Canada and the Republic of Macedonia established diplomatic relations in 1996 and have enjoyed a good relationship ever since. Macedonian and Canadian parliamentarians have the opportunity to work together through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*. Parliamentary exchanges such as the visit of Speaker Milliken to your country last year complement these ties. By learning more about each other's country, we improve our ability to make wise decisions on issues of mutual concern.

Our countries also cooperate through the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*. And, as a founding member of NATO, we have been pleased to see your participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, as well as the Membership Action Plan.

Canada continues to be a strong supporter of Macedonia's membership to NATO. Managing the international environment has not been an easy matter and we are convinced that NATO membership for Macedonia would both strengthen the Alliance and enhance regional stability. Canadians see Macedonia as a sound partner – one we hope will soon join the Alliance table and one with whom we expect to achieve great things in future.

Canadians look forward to our two countries forging an even closer relationship in coming years. With increased contact and cooperation, we will undoubtedly develop more shared interests, as well as an increasingly strong appreciation for one another's unique characteristics.

In closing, Mr. Prime Minister, let me say that we are very pleased to have you visit Canada and to have the opportunity to engage in these discussions. On behalf of my colleagues, let me offer you a warm welcome and wish you a pleasant stay.

Благодарам!/blagódam!/(Thank you)!

Na zdravje! (To your health)!