

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON MARKING
THE CLOSE OF THE XXTH CANADA–MEXICO
INTERPARLIAMENTARY MEETING**

**SPEAKER'S DINING ROOM
25 NOVEMBER 2014**

Speaker Scheer,
Your Excellencies,
Honourable parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Speaker's dining room and to the Parliament of Canada as we conclude the 20th Canada–Mexico Interparliamentary Meeting.

Senator Nolin kindly agreed to participate in the meetings as my representative and deserves our thanks for doing so and for his important contributions. The business sessions were lively and constructive, and there is no doubt that your discussions on economic cooperation and competitiveness, as well as mobility and human linkages, have left you with much to consider.

New friendships and renewed acquaintances are also part of the process, and these interparliamentary meetings bring us closer together with a new level of understanding. Visits between our two countries are relatively frequent making this more a gathering of friends than a luncheon with strangers.

There is much to celebrate this year, with 2014 marking the 20th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Since NAFTA entered into force, our trade and investment relationship has grown considerably and we are now each other's third largest trading partner.

Tourism is a particularly important industry in our relationship. The varied weather you have experienced during the past few days will give you an understanding as to why Mexico is a favoured destination for Canadians.

We are also celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, highly regarded as a model for international labour-mobility arrangements. Our extensive commercial ties will no doubt be of benefit to us as Canada and Mexico engage in multilateral trade negotiations.

In 1944, Canada and Mexico first established official diplomatic relations. We may be separated by our large and influential neighbour – the United States – but for 70 years our partnership has flourished across the spectrum of strategic policy areas.

Recent high-level visits between our countries have underlined the significance of our expansive ties. In February of this year, Prime Minister Harper and his counterpart President Enrique Peña Nieto announced a renewed Canada–Mexico Joint Action Plan focusing on fostering competitive and sustainable economies, protecting our citizens, enhancing people-to-people ties, and leveraging our partnership both regionally and globally.

Academic and cultural ties are also important to our partnership, and Canada and Mexico have sought to ensure that our youth are well-educated.

For example, through the Emerging Leaders in Americas Program, 396 students from Mexico have received scholarships since 2009. Mexican researchers have received funding through Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships and the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships program, and Mexican students are eligible for the International Experience Canada program – an initiative that enables young Canadians and Mexicans to travel, work, and study in each other’s countries.

By investing in our youth through such programs, Canada and Mexico are not only helping to enrich the lives of future generations of leaders, but are also securing the linkages between our nations for years to come.

The Canada–Mexico relationship is also sustained by our continued interparliamentary engagement. Since our first parliamentary exchange in 1975, we have continued to discuss a broad range of issues. The additional channels of communication offered through parliamentary diplomacy provide a complementary tool to traditional diplomacy on sensitive issues. Our ability to speak freely on issues with our foreign counterparts helps to foster understanding, building networks and trusting relationships.

This will be my last Canada–Mexico meeting as Speaker of Canada’s Senate. It has been a privilege to participate over the years and to witness our ties growing closer. In the years to come I am confident that our Canada–Mexico Interparliamentary relations will continue to evolve and flourish.

In closing, I wish to thank our Mexican visitors for joining us in Ottawa this year and propose a toast to their good health and to the future of Canada–Mexico Interparliamentary relations.

Cheers, *santé* and *salud*!