

**A TOAST GIVEN BY SPEAKER KINSELLA AT A LUNCH HOSTED  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY SERGEI MIRONOV,  
SPEAKER OF THE FEDERATION COUNCIL-RUSSIA**

Privet (Pree-vyeht)

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to his Excellency Mr. Sergei Mironov, Chairman of the Council of Federation, of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, for the warm hospitality that he has shown us during our visit. My colleagues and I are delighted to have this chance to meet with you and exchange views on matters that affect our respective parliaments.

Chairman Mironov, we are honoured to be able to benefit from your extensive experience in Russian public life. In 1994, you were first elected to the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, serving as both deputy of the Legislative Assembly and as acting Chairman. Then, in 2001, you were elected to the Council of Federation, where you were a member of the Council of Federation Committee on Constitutional Legislation and Judicial and Legal Affairs. You were also elected as Chairman of the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

It is our honour to be able to participate in the tradition of parliamentary exchanges between our two countries and we hope that they continue in future. These parliamentary exchanges grant us the opportunity to strengthen ties between our two countries, as well as deepen our mutual understanding.

Canada and Russia have much in common, as was evidenced in the parliamentary exchanges that took place in 2005. During those visits, we were able to discuss the importance of Arctic issues in both countries, as well as examine ways in which we could cooperate further in this area. We also focused on our mutual commitment to security and counter-terrorism through our partnership in the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Another area touched upon was the growing importance of economic ties between our two countries.

My colleagues and I greatly appreciate this opportunity to discuss these, as well as other issues of mutual interest during the course of our visit to your vibrant country.

Our visit to Russia this year is particularly meaningful, as 2007 marks the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and Russia.

Throughout the years, our relationship has grown and strengthened based upon our common experiences as northern, resource rich and multi-ethnic states. Indeed, our cooperation on northern issues spans over 35 years through the establishment of the Arctic Council and most recently, through the creation of the Arctic and North Working Group of the Canada-Russia Intergovernmental Economic Commission.

With Russia's rapid economic growth and vast natural resource wealth, Canada has been keen in recent years to strengthen economic relations with Russia through the Canada-Russia Business Council.

Cultural ties between the two countries also continue to evolve. In 2003, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and a delegation of Canadians prominent in the arts community visited Russia and established lasting contacts with their Russian counterparts. Since then, Canadian performers have been featured in Russia's cultural scene, including over 40 nights of Canadian theatrical performances at the Chekhov Theatre Festival in Moscow this year.

While it is important to look back at the accomplishments of the past sixty-five years, it is also important to look towards the future and how we could expand and strengthen our relationship. I believe that parliamentary exchanges play an important role in this regard. My colleagues and I look forward to exploring with you the different ways in which we could enhance the friendship between our two countries.

In closing, let me offer a toast to Chairman Mironov. We have greatly enjoyed this opportunity to meet with you and experience your gracious hospitality, as well as the warmth of the Russian people. We look forward to continuing this tradition of parliamentary exchanges between our two countries in future.

Spasibo (Spah-see'-bah)