

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

On the occasion of a Reception for  
Canadian Museums Day on Parliament Hill

September 29, 2009

Mr. McAvity,  
Honourable Senators,  
Members of the House of Commons,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Senate and to this historic room which is part of the Speaker's Chambers. It has some of the characteristics of a museum, which I think our guests will appreciate. Joining us today are representatives of Canadian museums who are here for Canadian Museums Day on Parliament Hill.

Museums are an integral element of our society, helping to preserve our past and enabling Canadians to gain a better understanding of the background which forms the underpinnings of our nation today. They showcase our amazingly diverse heritage and our many accomplishments. They contribute to our sense of national identity.

Museums come in many sizes and forms, and include art galleries, aquaria, zoos and even sports halls-of-fame. There are over 2500 separate entities across the country falling within this rubric, with the largest concentration likely being here in Ottawa. You can hardly turn around without running into one, ranging from the Museum of Civilizations across the river to the National Art Gallery to the Museum of Natural History down Metcalfe Street, to the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography to the Currency Museum of the Bank of Canada just across the way on Sparks Street. My own home city of Fredericton has a number, of course, with a personal favourite being the Beaverbrook Art Gallery.

Museums can and do inspire us. That inspiration may lead to innovation and certainly leads to a greater appreciation of all that we have been and all that we can be.

Tourists, particularly international tourists, find museums an irresistible attraction. Most make it a point to visit one or more during the course of their stay in Canada and in doing so they learn a great deal about our nation. They benefit from their experience and our economy enjoys a considerable benefit as well.

Museums also offer employment opportunities. In a partnership with the Government of Canada this summer, the Canadian Museums Association administered the creation of some 1400 meaningful, high quality summer jobs at over 700 museums. This was done through the Department of Heritage and the Young Canada Works Program.

Although national museums have traditionally been housed here in Ottawa, this year an announcement was made that a new museum would be created in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The National Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 will help visitors understand the importance of immigration in the development of our nation, with Pier 21 itself having been a key focal point for early arrivals, particularly those of European origin.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is in the process of becoming a reality in Winnipeg, Manitoba, with construction beginning this year and a projected opening date in the spring of 2012. This first national museum outside the national capital was a project which was many years in the making, and is a result of a partnership between federal, provincial, and municipal governments working with the private sector. It is an extraordinary undertaking.

These new developments reflect a growing and continuing appreciation of the importance of museums, not just for their role in preserving and explaining our history, but for their more immediate and direct contribution to the economy. In a nutshell, Canadians support museums and museums support Canadians.

This is a message which bears repetition, and I want to thank museum representatives for being with us today to remind us of the importance of museums, as well as for sharing their views and recommendations.