

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON IN HONOUR OF
SPEAKER OKALIK OF THE NUNAVUT
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**SPEAKER'S DINING ROOM
FEBRUARY 9, 2011**

Speaker Okalik,
Mr. Quirke,
Honourable Senators and Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the Speaker's Dining Room, and particularly our two honoured guests, Speaker Okalik of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut and Mr. Quirke, Clerk of that Assembly. Your visit comes at a festive time for the city of Ottawa. With the renowned winter festival Winterlude underway, it is a wonderful time to be here and I hope you will be able to take the opportunity to experience some of Ottawa's many attractions. Warmer weather is no doubt one of them, and I don't say that to all our visitors.

Speaker Okalik, it is a delight to have you with us today. You have held many important posts in the service of your legislative assembly. That you have represented your constituency for close to a dozen years, nine of those as Premier of Nunavut, shows that you are respected and trusted by the people in your community, and in the territory as a whole. Having studied at both Carleton University and the University of Ottawa, this city was for a period your "home away from home." I hope that this week's visit brings back warm remembrances and adds to the many fond memories of Ottawa you undoubtedly hold.

Mr. John Quirke, it is also a pleasure to have you here. As Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut since 1999, we are very pleased to be able to benefit from your long and distinguished experience.

This morning's meeting allowed us to get better acquainted and proved to be an exceptional learning opportunity. I enjoyed hearing your perspectives on common issues, particularly on the role of Speakers and their administrative responsibilities. I was also interested to hear about your experiences in dealing with multiple languages in the Assembly.

Although nearly 12 years have passed since April 1, 1999, that date is still fresh in the minds of many.

It was on that date that we, as Canadians, witnessed an historic, significant and extraordinary achievement. As our hearts and minds looked to the north, the Inuit people realized a long-held and cherished dream with the creation of the new territory of Nunavut.

On that day, Canada's map was redrawn, not in conflict and discord, as all too often seems to be the case in far too many parts of the world, but in partnership and peace. Our map changed to reflect the desire of the people of Nunavut to have greater control over their destiny, to flourish in their diversity, and to continue to participate proudly as citizens in the life of this great country.

The people and government of Nunavut have faced a number of challenges, and have enjoyed many successes over the course of the past 12 years. They work tirelessly to build a better future for themselves, for their children and for their grandchildren. While the geography of the land itself and the climate of the North demand a great deal from those who live there, the Nunavut people have shown themselves to be strong, resourceful and equal to any challenge.

Nunavut's greatest resource, and perhaps its greatest strength, is still largely untapped. Nunavut's youth, with their enormous hopes and boundless dreams for the future, form a majority of the territory's population. By combining respected and time-honoured traditions with modern tools, their skills and talents will surely be of great benefit to their communities. These communities will face challenges presented by the vastness of the land and the demands of the 21st century. That they will succeed in accomplishing their goals and fulfilling their destiny is not in doubt, for they have the vision and wisdom of their Elders and their leaders to guide them.

Nunavut, which in Inuktitut means "Our Land," is a testament to the best of what we are as a nation. I understand, Speaker Okalik, that your last name means "rabbit." Not long ago, China celebrated the start of its new year, and 2011 is the year of the rabbit. It is a good omen and I hope "your" year proves to be both lucky and successful.

In closing, I would like to thank both of you for coming to Ottawa and for taking the time to be with us today. It has been an important opportunity to learn about recent developments in your legislature, to gain new perspectives and insights on policies and practices, and – perhaps most importantly – to build lasting relationships.

Thank you. Qujanamiik. [ku-jana-mEEK]