

Toast Notes

Speaker Noël A. Kinsella
Buffet reception
Toronto: The World within a City
19 September 2008

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe:
Parliamentary Assembly – Fall Meeting
18-21 September 2008

Toronto, Canada

Mr. President,
Fellow Parliamentarians,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My wife Ann and I are delighted to welcome you this evening to this very special celebration, “Toronto: the World within a City”, and to share with all of you our pride in the diversity of our country.

As you know, my co-host this evening, the Speaker of the House of Commons, is currently running in the federal election. On his behalf, I send you greetings and I wish to take this opportunity to wish him well.

Respect for human rights and tolerance have been the foundations for the OSCE since the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. Many of the national groups represented here this evening rightly took advantage of the commitments made by states some 30 years ago to hold their governments to account where the treatment of their citizens and respect for their human rights were concerned. The tenacity they have shown, sometimes at the risk of their own security, has often been rewarded. Many of them are today part of the OSCE family in their own right and have enriched the campaign for a more secure region with their values and commitments to the OSCE principles.

Canada, whose diverse population includes people from all four corners of the earth, fully recognizes the benefits of the OSCE principles. These values, particularly those related to the promotion of tolerance and respect for human rights, are inherent in the Canadian culture. Your presence here today is further testimony to these values. If the OSCE is strengthened by promoting these principles, so too is Canada.

Indeed, Canada is a manifestation of the theme of our Fall Meetings, the OSCE in an Open World: Trade, Security, Migration. Without the movement of goods and services, without a global outlook in setting up partnerships and alliances, without the courage of people from around the world to set up a new home in a strange land of ice and snow, Canada would be a different country.

Likewise, this meeting of the OSCE PA, indeed the OSCE PA itself, would not be the same without the contributions of each and every one of you. I salute you for your work thus far and hope that you may continue for years to come to fulfill your duty as parliamentarians to the citizens of your respective countries.

On behalf of the Senate of Canada, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you, to all of the nations and cultures here tonight, for meeting here in Toronto and enriching us beyond measure. I very much look forward to opportunities in the future to strengthen the friendship between our countries, our peoples and our parliaments.