

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

**Ceremony for inductions
into the *Ordre de la Pléiade***

Thursday, November 5, 2009

Prime Minister,
Madam Chair and Members of the Canadian Branch of the
Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie,
Honourable Colleagues, Dear Friends,

What a privilege it is to address you on this occasion honouring the French language. On behalf of all my fellow recipients, thank you, members of the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*, for honouring us with induction into the *Ordre de la Pléiade*.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, who today is receiving the *Grand Croix de la Pléiade*, the highest distinction of the *Ordre de la francophonie et du dialogue des cultures*. This distinction is awarded in recognition of the Prime Minister's commitment to the French fact in Canada and to the ideals of cooperation and friendship of the Francophonie.

I would also like thank those of you who nominated us for this prestigious decoration of the Francophonie. We are especially honoured to join the many distinguished recipients who have long been standard bearers of this magnificent language that we share, defend and promote.

Originally from New Brunswick, Canada's only officially bilingual province, and the grandson of an Acadian woman named Lucie Bernard, I am especially proud of the mark that Francophones have made on our country's history. The French language is a treasure to be

cherished and we celebrate its impact on Canada, evident in particular in our steadfast promotion of culturally and linguistically strong Francophone minority communities right across the country.

I would like especially to thank my illustrious colleague and friend, the Honourable Andrée Champagne, Senator and Chair of the Canadian Section of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*, who in countless ways throughout her brilliant career has promoted the French language in Canada and in the Francophonie. As you have seen for yourselves, dear friends, Senator Champagne has tremendous talent in her use of language.

In being admitted today to the pantheon of the *Francophonie et du dialogue des cultures*, we join many fellow Canadians who over the years have championed the cause of French and the ideals of cooperation and friendship of *La Francophonie*. Being honoured in this way fills us with pride, as we reflect on the history and symbolism of this distinction.

In Greek mythology, the Pleiades were the seven daughters of the titan Atlas and the Oceanid Pleione, sisters of the Hyades. After being pursued by Orion for seven years, Zeus saved them by turning them into doves, and later into stars. Zeus placed them in the sky, where they are now part of the Taurus constellation.

In the less distant past, the name *La Pléiade* was given to a group of seven sixteenth-century French poets whose mission was to encourage writing in French. Their goal was to enrich the language and enhance the status of French literature. *La Pléiade* made a tremendous contribution to the development and standardization of French and played a major role in the rebirth of literature. *La Pléiade* is now the name of a series of prestige collections by Gallimard publishing, which feature works of some of the greatest writers including Gide, Malraux, Proust, Lévy-Strauss and Yourcenar.

In honouring us with the *Ordre de la Pléiade*, the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* is also honouring the memory of these poets and great writers by recognizing everything that has been done to preserve and strengthen the French language in daily life and in parliamentary affairs, thereby extending the influence of its key values.

The Pléiades also symbolize peace which, along with democracy, justice and human rights, is one of the fundamental values championed by the Francophonie. You may be aware of my commitment to human rights and justice and I know you will each in your own way continue to promote the values of the Francophonie so that they may transcend cultures and borders.

Congratulations once again to all those who work tirelessly to promote the French language, and thanks once again on behalf of all the recipients who have now joined the Pléiade.