

SPEAKING NOTES

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF
CONSTITUTION DAY IN POLAND**

**CANADIAN MUSEUM OF CIVILIZATION
MAY 3, 2010**

Your Excellency Bogdan Borusewicz,
Honourable Senators and Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Dzień dobry

It is my great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to the visiting parliamentary delegation from Poland. I hope that you enjoyed your visit to Toronto and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It is a particular honour to have you here with us on your Constitution Day in Poland. On this day in 1791 the Constitution of Poland was first signed, only to see the country partitioned a year later by invading forces. Since Poland regained its independence in November 1918, May 3rd has remained an important civic holiday, exemplifying the resilience of the Polish people. Recent tragic events give this holiday additional poignancy.

Like the rest of the world, Canadians were deeply saddened and shocked to learn of the accident that took the lives of President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, Maria, and 94 other people, including parliamentarians and some of Poland's top civilian and military leaders. It was just a year ago that Madame Maria Kaczynska was in Canada to pay a visit to Polish sites.

Despite many obstacles, President Kaczynski was a man who stood proudly for democracy and human rights. His sudden passing is a great loss for Poland and for his many friends here in Canada, particularly within the Polish-Canadian community. A national day of mourning took place in Canada on 15 April, which included memorial activities in our Parliament, to allow Canadians across the country to pay tribute to victims of the accident.

Canada cherishes its deep connection with the people of Poland. The strength of these bonds is evident in the friendships between our people as well as our more formal governmental relationship.

Your visit here is an expression of the ongoing friendship that Canada has with Poland. Although we live in a world of rapid communication and seemingly unlimited information, nothing can replace personal contact. The conversations we will hold – both formally and informally – will help to further cement what is already a flourishing and productive relationship.

Canada has always believed that international cooperation contributes to stability in the world. That is why long-term commitments – through international organizations and at the bilateral level – are so very important. In the case of our two countries, these types of commitments are aided by the substantial numbers of

Canadians of Polish descent – numbering over 800,000 according to our most recent Census – many of whom maintain contact with their ancestral home.

In closing, I would like to reiterate what a pleasure it is to have the visiting parliamentary delegation from Poland with us today to celebrate the adoption of the 3rd of May 1791 Constitution – the oldest constitution in Europe. I hope that everyone will enjoy tonight's reception here at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, held in honour of our visitors and this defining moment in Poland's history.