

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

ON THE OCCASION OF THE RED MASS RECEPTION

**CHATEAU LAURIER, OTTAWA
SEPTEMBER 22, 2011**

Justice Lebel,
Speaker Scheer,
Archbishop Prendergast,
Mr. Roussy,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Speaker Scheer and I are delighted to host this reception in the historic Chateau Laurier following the annual Red Mass, held this year at Notre Dame Cathedral and presided over by the Archbishop of Ottawa, the Most Reverend Terrence Prendergast.

The Red Mass is a special occasion, marking the opening of the courts. Its name comes from the colour of the robes worn by judges and the red vestments worn by the clergy celebrating this mass, as the guidance of the Holy Spirit is invoked for the judges, lawyers and others who work within the legal system.

This is a practice of long standing, reaching back to Paris in 1245 and to the reign of King Edward I in England in 1310. Although the Red Mass may not have been held in every year between then and now, it is currently celebrated annually

in many cities in Canada, the United States and around the world. Members of all faiths are welcomed.

The Saint Thomas More Lawyer's Guild of Ottawa organizes this reception each year. For those who may not be fully acquainted with the background, Sir Thomas More was well known as a lawyer in his day and was also a very important member of the court of Henry VIII. Unfortunately, he took what the reigning monarch regarded as the wrong side of an argument over the *Supremacy Act* and this led fairly directly to his execution. The legal system worked to a slightly different standard in those days. In 1935, Pope Pius XI recognized his martyrdom, and he was canonized a saint. In 2000, Pope John Paul II named Saint Thomas More the heavenly patron of statesmen and politicians.

One of the traditions is that a notable guest speaker is sought out to address the assembled guests. While I had that privilege last year in Toronto, this year we have with us someone who, like Sir Thomas More, is also a member of a highly distinguished court, in this case the Supreme Court of Canada.

Justice LeBel was born in the city of Québec, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Collège des Jésuites in the city of Québec in 1958 and a civil law degree from Laval University in 1961.

Before he was appointed to the Quebec Court of Appeal in 1984, Justice LeBel was a highly respected labour lawyer, legal author and law professor in Quebec. Somewhere along the way, he found time to become the author of a book that has become the gold standard for labour law in Quebec.

Justice LeBel was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada on 7 January 2000. Since his appointment to the Supreme Court, he has written several leading

judgments on matters of both civil and common law. His impact on Canadian jurisprudence has been undeniably significant and no doubt will continue until his departure from the bench.

Please join me in welcoming one of Canada's notable members of the Supreme Court of Canada, an individual with a brilliant legal mind, Justice Lebel.