

**NOTES FOR A TOAST TO BE GIVEN BY
THE SPEAKER KINSELLA AT A LUNCHEON
FOR THE PRIME MINISTER OF RUSSIA,
HIS EXCELLENCY VIKTOR ZUBKOV**

Your Excellency Prime Minister Zubkov,
Speaker Milliken,
Honourable parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests:

Along with my colleague Speaker Milliken and on behalf of the Parliament of Canada, I would like to raise a toast to His Excellency Viktor Zubkov, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

Excellency, we are honoured by your visit. You have been Prime Minister for only a short while, but we are anxious to hear your thoughts on developments in Russia.

On a personal note, I am glad to have the chance to repay the hospitality I enjoyed when I led a parliamentary delegation to Russia earlier this month. The many such exchanges between our countries have gone a long way to building lasting relationships between Canadian and Russian parliamentarians. We are also fortunate to have the Canada Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group to help us develop ties between our Parliaments.

For too long, our countries viewed each other with suspicion. Over the past fifteen years, however, we have developed a healthier, more cooperative relationship.

There are many good reasons for us to cooperate. The Russian Federation and Canada share much more than an appreciation of vast distances and experience with very cold winters. As northern lands, we are both very much aware of the importance of Arctic issues, such as territorial integrity, environmental change, and natural resources development, to name only a few. We are also aware of the distinct cultures of our northern inhabitants. Fortunately, we are able to work together in the Arctic Council to address these issues.

Although these northern issues are important, Canada and Russia have many other areas of mutual concern. We cooperate in fields as diverse as non-proliferation, the agri-food sector, high technology, counter-terrorism, federalism, and the arts. To help foster cooperation in these and other areas, there has been an increase in the number of high-level meetings and parliamentary exchanges between our two countries.

To give an example, the first ever Canada-Russia Business Summit was held earlier this year.

Canadians look forward to our two countries forging an even closer relationship in coming years. With increased contact and cooperation, we will undoubtedly develop more shared interests as well as an increasingly strong appreciation for one another's unique characteristics.

In closing, Mr. Prime Minister, let me say that we are very excited by your visit to the National Capital Region and glad of the opportunity to have these discussions. On behalf of my colleagues, let me offer you a warm welcome and wish you a pleasant stay.