

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A DINNER IN HONOUR OF
H. E. DR. ABDULLAH MOHAMMED AL-SHEIKH,
SPEAKER OF THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA CONSULTATIVE
COUNCIL OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA, AND
A VISITING SAUDI ARABIAN DELEGATION**

**SPEAKER'S DINING ROOM
NOVEMBER 11, 2014**

Your Excellency, Dr. Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh,
Chief Justice McLachlin,

Your Excellency, Ambassador AlSudairy,

Honourable members of the Saudi Arabian delegation,

Your Excellencies, the members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Honourable Senators,

Ladies and gentlemen:

As-salaam alaikum, good evening, and welcome to the historic Speaker's Chambers here in our national Parliament. This gathering provides an opportunity to exchange views on matters of mutual interest with our distinguished visitors from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to become better acquainted.

Dr. Al-Sheikh, we were honoured to receive you here in 2010 and it is a pleasure to see you again. Our Canadian parliamentary delegation enjoyed a reciprocal visit to Saudi Arabia in 2011, which included a memorable visit to the Majlis Ash-Shura at the magnificent Al Yamamah Palace.

Since then, we strengthened our friendship at the G-20 Speakers' Consultations last year in Mexico City, and the year before that in Riyadh. On each occasion, the importance of developing closer ties between the Parliament of Canada and the Shura Council of Saudi Arabia was discussed, with a view to building more broadly upon the friendship, values and goals shared by our two countries.

It was at the G-20 Speakers' Consultation in Riyadh two years ago that Your Excellency, as our gracious host, placed on the agenda the topic of a "global dialogue of cultures." The concept of dialogue between the followers of faiths and cultures was considered as a basis for peaceful coexistence at the international level.

Saudi Arabia, under the great vision and leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, is practicing what it preaches. During an official trip to Europe last month which included a brief stop in Vienna, our delegation took the opportunity to visit the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, also known as the KAICIID Dialogue Centre.

Through this Centre, Saudi Arabia has provided an example to the world of how countries and individuals can collaborate in order to better understand and build productively upon our cultural and religious differences.

King Abdullah's royal decree of January 2013 is another instance of leadership, as it granted thirty of the 150 seats on the Shura Council to women. This is in line with the current world average for women in the single or lower chambers of parliament. It is a tremendous initiative, one which benefits greatly from the skill and wisdom which Your Excellency brings to the Shura Council.

In the forty years since diplomatic ties were officially established between our countries, relations between Canada and Saudi Arabia have evolved significantly, in many positive directions, and with the promise of greater things to come.

Saudi Arabia is a key partner for Canada in the Middle East in a wide range of fields. Our countries share many common interests on peace and security issues and Saudi Arabia has been a committed partner in combatting terrorism in the region.

On the commercial front, the strong ties between our two nations have contributed to an ever growing trade relationship with \$4 billion in annual two-way trade. Your country is also a trade and investment priority market for the Government of Canada.

Saudi Arabia is the fourth largest source of foreign students in Canada, with some 17,000 currently studying in Canadian educational institutions. These educational exchanges help to promote knowledge sharing and foster connections between our nations.

This visit to Ottawa is an opportunity to reflect on our relations in these and other areas. People-to-people contacts – whether between parliamentarians, students, businessmen, or everyday citizens – are essential to advancing bilateral cooperation between our countries.

Ambassadors, as many of those present know first-hand, have an indispensable role to play in this process. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend the outstanding contribution to Saudi-Canada relations which is being made on the front lines by His Excellency Ambassador Naif bin AlSudairy.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to once again express our sincere thanks to you for making the long journey to Canada to continue our discussions. We hope the rest of your visit in Ottawa is interesting and fruitful, and that you have a safe journey home.

Shukran jazilan.