

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL DAY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

**RESIDENCE OF THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES, OTTAWA
10 FEBRUARY 2014**

Mrs. Šešum-Ćurčić and Mr. Ćurčić

Your Excellencies,

Honourable Senators and Members of the House of Commons

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to join you this evening to celebrate the National Day of the Republic of Serbia and to bring greetings and best wishes on behalf of the Parliament of Canada. I would like to begin by thanking our hosts, Her Excellency Mrs. Mirjana Šešum-Ćurčić, Chargé d'affaires of the Republic of Serbia to Canada, and Mr. Radojica Ćurčić for their gracious hospitality in hosting this event.

The National Assembly of Serbia came together on February 15, 1835 to adopt and pass the first Serbian Constitution, which was based in part upon the French Constitutional Charter of 1814 and the Belgian Constitution of 1831. Although there have been many challenges since that time, the Serbian people and their society have continued to benefit from that auspicious beginning.

There have also been many beneficial developments in relations between Canada and the Republic of Serbia in recent years. Trade, for example, has been increasing with Canadian exports to Serbia rising from approximately \$8.5 million in 2010 to roughly \$10.5 million in 2012. Canadian imports from Serbia also

increased during this period, from approximately \$12.8 million in 2010 to \$14.0 million in 2012.

The continuing negotiations towards a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, which started in March of last year, have the potential to strengthen our economic ties even further by improving investment opportunities in each other's country.

Canada and Serbia are more than just political allies or trade partners. Thousands of people travel between our respective countries every year for pleasure, business and to visit family and friends. In December 2006, Canada signed an Air Transport Agreement with Serbia, improving the movement of both people and goods between our countries.

Investments from Canadian businesses have no doubt contributed to strengthening these economic ties. Magna International Inc., Canada's largest auto-parts supplier, opened a factory in the province of Vojvodina last December. As part of an acquisition made last year, Molson Coors also owns a brewery in Serbia, in the town of Apatin. In the agricultural sector, it is interesting to note that Serbia is home to the largest herd of Canadian dairy cattle in Europe.

These examples illustrate the excellent quality of economic and trade relations between the two countries.

During a delightful visit to Serbia in September just 5 months ago, our parliamentary delegation had the pleasure of meeting with a number of officials, including President Nikolić, Prime Minister Dačić and Minister of Finance Radulovic. Our discussions were fruitful, and there were a number of areas in which there has been encouraging cooperation.

Personal connections at all levels enable us to benefit from each other's experiences and to come away with new perspectives. The people we met both officially and unofficially greeted us openly and warmly. We felt welcome everywhere we went and that is in itself an excellent recommendation of the quality of a nation.

In closing, I want to thank our gracious hosts once again for bringing us together to celebrate Serbia's National Day. I look forward to a continued strengthening of the relations between our countries and between our people in the coming years.

Thank you.