

**A TOAST GIVEN  
BY SPEAKER KINSELLA IN AUSTRIA TO SPEAKER ERLITZ**

Your Excellency Speaker Erlitz, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Guten tag

We are very pleased to be with you and would like to extend our thanks for all you have done to make our visit an enjoyable and productive one. This is only the latest in a series of parliamentary exchanges between our two countries, and my colleagues and I are very happy to be able to continue the tradition.

Speaker Erlitz, it is a special honour to meet you. The Bundesrat has a rotating presidency, and you have been Speaker for only a short while, but we are eager to hear your views on the situation here. On a personal note, I always find it very rewarding to compare notes with a fellow Speaker.

When Canadians think of Austria, they think of the elegance of Vienna, the beauty of your music, and the serenity of the Alps. They cherish the contributions made to world culture by Austrians and those who have made Vienna their home. They bask in the works of composers such as Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Franz Schubert, and dance to the waltzes of Johann Strauss. Canadians also appreciate your magnificent wines, which bring us summer's pleasures in the depth of winter, and have inspired us to make wines of our own – which I encourage you to sample when you visit our country! And, of course, Canadians are always impressed by your superb skiers.

Canada's relations with Austria have gone through a number of phases over the past century and a quarter. First, there was a period of immigration, when Austrians helped settle our country. Then, during the years immediately following the Second World War, Canada helped Austria as part of European reconstruction, while continuing to welcome Austrian immigrants. During the Cold War, our countries co-operated in making the international system work by participating in peacekeeping and, since the end of the Cold War, both countries have become members of regional trading blocs which have encouraged a great deal of commerce between us.

In the international sphere, Canada and Austria share a commitment to multilateralism. Believing that peacekeeping is important for international stability, we have taken part in United Nations peacekeeping operations in areas such as the Golan Heights, the Congo, and Cyprus. In addition, Canadians and Austrians worked in close co-operation to bring about the Ottawa Convention on landmines. I take great pride in knowing that together, our countries are making this world a safer and better place.

The similarities and the differences in our systems of government fascinate parliamentarians from Canada and Austria, both of which are federal states and parliamentary democracies. Canada's provinces, like Austria's, have their own legislative assemblies and both countries have upper and lower chambers. In both countries, the jurisdiction of each level of government is spelled out in the constitution. Even so, in Canada, disputes over jurisdiction have led to conflicts between the federal government and the provinces; at times it feels as though this wrangling has taken over from hockey as our national sport. We find it interesting that some Austrian provinces have also pressed for more decentralized decision-making.

The similarities and differences in our systems make visits between our parliamentarians very important. Both Canadians and Austrians are always curious to see how other federal states have succeeded in resolving the particular problems associated with federalism. I hope that each of us will learn from these exchanges and will be able to put that knowledge to good use. I know on a first-hand basis how vitally important such exchanges can be.

My colleagues and I shall cherish this visit to Austria and remember your warm hospitality for many years to come. We also look forward to receiving you as guests in Canada. On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to raise a toast.

Thank you all so much.

Danke schön