

**A TOAST GIVEN
BY SPEAKER KINSELLA AT A DINNER HOSTED
BY THE SPEAKER OF THE SENATE OF POLAND**

Your Excellency Speaker Borusewicz, honourable Senators, ladies and gentlemen:

Czesc (Chesh),

Your warm and generous hospitality has made us feel at home.

Speaker Borusewicz, we would like to thank you in particular for hosting this wonderful meal. On a personal note, I always find it very rewarding to compare notes with a fellow Speaker. Your long experience as democratic activist and as a parliamentarian is a benefit to us all.

One of the purposes of our visit here is to improve our understanding of Poland. Canadians perhaps do not realize that Poland's constitutional history goes back hundreds of years. Indeed, the constitution that the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania ratified in 1791 was the first written constitution of Europe. Your modern institutions are a monument to your faith in freedom and democracy.

In my time as Speaker of the Canadian Senate, I have come to realize the importance of exchanging ideas with other parliamentarians. The national parliamentary traditions of Canada date back 140 years, and we are always eager to share the benefits of this long history. At the same time, it would be arrogant to think that we cannot learn from other parliaments.

Parliamentarians have much to contribute to the exchange of information between our countries. Canadian Senators reflect Canada's diversity, coming as they do from different regions of our vast country, from many different ethnic backgrounds, and from widely varying professional fields. They have long experience in their fields or in public life.

One of our Senators – the Honourable Mira Spivak – was born in Poland.

In Canada, as well as considering legislation, our Senate committees often conduct studies into important issues. To give recent examples, our Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology has published major studies on the state of the health care system in Canada. These are considered to be important contributions to the process of reforming the health care system and were the subject of debate and comment throughout the country. Meanwhile, our committee on National Defence and Security has prepared a number of reports as part of its on-going study into Canada's national security policy. Again, they have

been the subject of comment and discussion in the media throughout the country. Our visit here gives us the opportunity to see how your committees work.

It is important for our respective parliamentarians to understand each other because Canada and Poland share many of the same goals. To this end, our parliamentarians cooperate through organizations such as the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, *l'Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie*, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Within the Canadian Parliament we also have the Canada-Poland Friendship Group.

Canada has always believed that such international cooperation can go a long way to ensuring stability in the world. That is why long-term commitments – not only through international organizations, but also at the bilateral level – are so important. In the case of our two countries, we are aided by the fact that there are substantial numbers of Canadians of Polish ancestry, many of whom have maintained contact with their ancestral home.

Our visit here is an expression of Canada's on-going friendship with Poland. Although we live in a world of rapid communication and seemingly unlimited information, nothing can replace the value of personal contact. The conversations we will hold – both formally and informally – will go a long way to cementing a flourishing and productive relationship.

Speaker Borusewicz, on behalf of my colleagues, let me thank you again for your generous hospitality. We look forward to seeing you again soon. Please join me in raising a toast to our hosts.

Dziękuję bardzo (Zhe-koo'-yay bahrd'-zoh)