

**Speaking Notes**  
**The Hon. Noël A. Kinsella**  
**Speaker of the Senate of Canada**

**St. Thomas University Auditorium Dedication**  
**Friday, November 21, 2008**

Your Honour,  
Most Reverend Chancellor,  
Your Worship, Honourable Minister(s)  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the St. Thomas University community for the naming of this auditorium. I trust that all who are heard and all that is heard in this place will speak to the words of Psalm 118 verse 66: “Teach me Goodness, Discipline and Knowledge”, these words of course also being the motto of the university.

Mr. President, an auditorium is special space, for it is at this location where a quintessential human characteristic, namely, “communication”, flows. In terms of a human rights analysis, the “auditorium” is a place where the right to be heard and the right to hear are exercised in community. Political philosopher and freedom thinker, John Stuart Mill, once wrote:

“The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.”

The right to freedom of expression is articulated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

In Canada, Section 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees that everyone has “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication”.

Canadians, as all free people, treasure this right to gather, to speak, and to hear. A “conditio sine qua non” of the right to be heard and the right to hear is the availability of space or place of venue wherein to act out these rights. Creativity requires having the appropriate tools at hand. An auditorium is an essential tool for the cross-disciplinary activities that make St. Thomas University a destination for students, faculty and the larger community.

Coincidentally, yesterday November 20<sup>th</sup> was National Child Day, designated by Parliament to mark the anniversary of the UN’s adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2006 the theme of the commemoration, from among the rights outlined in the Convention, was the “The Right to Be Heard”. This auditorium appropriately stands for the right to hear and the right to be heard.

In this context, it should be noted that, if the right to free speech is to have any meaning, it must also require that people listen, even to things they may not want to hear. Those who seek to claim the right to be heard cannot logically seek to prevent others from speaking.

The auditorium also serves as a setting or laboratory for human respect. It is in the auditorium where we learn about respect both for the opinions of others and for their right to have that opinion. Little is static along the pathway of life; therefore it is our challenge to discern and speak our minds about what is going on in the world we travel.

Etymologically the term “auditorium” comes from the Latin “audire” meaning “to hear”. We have, for example, the Latin expression: “Audi alteram partem” which exhorts us to “hear the other side”.

This lovely auditorium is a “meeting house”, which not only serves the needs of the academic community, but is an addition to the “meeting space” infrastructure, of the business and wider regional community of Fredericton. The academic community as well as the Fredericton civic, business, and cultural communities are offered through this new auditorium an outstanding accessible meeting venue. It is also a cozy spot where people can attend a wide variety of events, such as poetry readings, author lectures, performances, civic discussions and film screenings.

I am pleased that this auditorium will serve as a place for many academic and community events; the auditorium is an important meeting space, a space where people can come together. This great hall is a multipurpose venue available to the university and wider regional community for meetings.

I trust that this auditorium will be a space wherein ideas and people will connect and grow, a space wherein we can see visions and dream dreams. Hopefully within these walls good debates and creative ideas will enrich the arts, social sciences and all probing thought, such that in this way St. Thomas University can continue to be a patron of art, literature and creative activity. Let this place be fertile soil wherein to sow seeds of

culture, of free speech, of imaginative drama, of music, and debate. May all who enter and stay a while reap a rich harvest from the ideas which are herein planted.

This naming is thus a wonderful tribute, one which I greatly appreciate. I am honoured to have this auditorium bear my name. To St. Thomas University I say: "Thank you".