

**NOTES FOR A TOAST TO BE GIVEN BY SPEAKER KINSELLA
AT A DINNER FOR THE CZECH PRIME MINISTER**

Your Excellency Prime Minister Topolánek,
Minister Parakanová,
Minister Řebíček,
Honourable parliamentarians
Distinguished guests:

Ahoj

Prime Minister Topolánek, it is a particular honour to meet you. Thanks to your long experience in Czech public life, you are able to bring us up to date about the situation in your country.

During your visit, we will have the chance to discuss our many areas of common concern. With the world facing new and deadly threats – threats that go to the very heart of free societies everywhere – it is essential that democracies maintain contact so that we can coordinate our responses. Given your history, your points of view on these matters will help guide us as we make the choices that are necessary to counter these new threats.

Over the years, Canadians have followed the developments in the Czech Republic with great interest. After the dramatic events surrounding the Velvet Revolution, you accomplished the important task of building democracy. Canada supported the Czech Republic during this period of adjustment. Indeed, between 1990 and 2004, the Canadian International Development Agency supported over 270 projects to assist you in making the transition to a free market democracy.

During this time our countries have also conducted cultural exchanges. Canadians are fascinated by the rich and ancient culture of the Czech Republic. At the same time, we are proud to share the lessons of Canada's bilingual and multicultural evolution.

I am particularly pleased to see that Canada is supporting Canadian Studies programs in universities in Prague and Brno.

Parliamentarians have much to contribute to this exchange of information between our countries. Canadian Senators reflect Canada's diversity, as they come 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. During your visit here, we hope to be able to share some of our experience and knowledge with you. At

the same time, we are anxious to learn about the changes you have made and the challenges you face.

We look forward to our two countries forging an even closer relationship in coming years. With increased contact, we will undoubtedly develop more shared interests as well as an increasingly strong appreciation for one another's unique characteristics.

In closing, Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to thank you for leading this delegation to our National Capital Region and for taking the time to meet with us. I hope you have a good stay here and a safe journey home.

I would like to raise a toast to our Czech guests and to thank them for making the long journey to come and visit us. We don't seem to get many visitors in February, and I admire your dedication in visiting Ottawa in the middle of winter.

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