

SPEAKING NOTES
Speaker Noël A. Kinsella
On the occasion the departure of Ambassador Al Sowaidi
November 5, 2008

Your Excellency, Ambassador Al Sowaidi,
Honourable parliamentarians,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Your Excellency, allow me to take this opportunity to thank you, on behalf of the Parliament of Canada, for your distinguished service as Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Canada.

In your years as Ambassador, our two countries have forged a strong and positive relationship, one which I had the pleasure of discussing with you when we met in August.

The United Arab Emirates is Canada's second largest trading partner amongst the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council – the GCC. Canadian exports to the UAE have more than quadrupled in the last five years, reaching a record \$1.1 billion in 2007.

A year ago, Canada's Minister of Trade led a mission to the UAE to pursue greater trade, investment, and business cooperation between our countries. This reflects the growing recognition that significant opportunities exist to further these relationships and linkages, and also to capitalize on our countries' mutual interests in the areas of global investment, engineering, financial services, infrastructure development, oil and gas development, and environmental technologies, among others.

The UAE is also playing an important and growing role in the Canadian economy. This was exemplified by the considerable investments made by Dubai Ports World in Canada's Pacific Coast port facilities in 2006.

The overall economy of the GCC region, and the UAE in particular, continues to grow at a rapid pace and to make exciting and innovative advances. As the GCC countries assume an increasingly important role in the global economy, Canadian companies and diplomats have continued to build strong partnerships with their counterparts in the UAE.

In this context, it is also vital that Canadian parliamentarians get involved in building relationships and fostering mutual understanding between our countries. The visit of a delegation of members of Canada's House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade to the UAE in June 2007 is an excellent example of such exchanges.

Just as important as our economic relationship, our countries share a belief in the need for co-operation with other nations to foster peace, stability, and prosperity in our respective regions and with our global partners. This is reflected in our work at the United Nations and in our countries' contribution to international efforts to pursue peace and promote greater understanding in the Middle East. Our governments have also worked to address issues surrounding international terrorism.

In closing, allow me to express once again my deep appreciation to you, Ambassador Al Sowaidi, for your distinguished service as Ambassador of the UAE to Canada. I sincerely hope that you have the opportunity to continue to play a role in building the relationship between Canada and the United Arab Emirates. I wish you and your family all the best in the future.