

**SPEAKING NOTES  
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SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**AT A LUNCHEON HOSTED BY THE MAYOR  
OF VENTSPILS, LATVIA**

**JANUARY 20, 2010**

Mayor Aivars Lembergs,  
Honourable Parliamentarians,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please join me in offering a toast to the Mayor of Ventspils, Mr. Aivars Lembergs. (To your health) Uz veselību!

Let me begin by thanking you, Mayor Lembergs, for welcoming us this morning to this beautiful port city. As Ventspils is one of the oldest cities in Latvia, our short stay here will – sadly – only be enough for a taste of the city’s rich history and culture.

Visiting Ventspils, I am reminded of Saint John, the port city in my home province of New Brunswick. It also reminds me that people who do not live on the coasts don’t think about the importance of our ports, even though a large volume of goods flow through them.

In fact, both Ventspils and Saint John generate the majority of their municipal revenues from port services. Not only is the Ventspils Free Port the biggest in Latvia, it is one of the largest in the Baltic Sea in terms of cargo turnover rate. One of the port’s main goals has been to develop new types of operations, in particular Ro-Ro and container shipping, which was achieved in 2000 with the completion of a multipurpose-handling terminal.

In my country, the Port of Saint John is one of Canada’s major ports, recognized for its strategic importance to the nation’s trade and economy. The port plays an integral role in New Brunswick’s petroleum, potash and forestry industries, while providing essential infrastructure for the region and supporting about 3,000

direct and indirect jobs. Recently, Saint John saw the opening of Canada's first liquefied natural gas terminal. This \$1.2 billion project positions New Brunswick as an energy hub in North America's northeast and is attracting world-class companies, as well as shipping lines, to Saint John.

Bilateral trade relations between Canada and Latvia have shown promising signs of growth in recent years, with benefits for both countries. Two-way merchandise trade between Canada and Latvia rose to \$81.4 million in 2008, up from \$53.4 million in 2007. The signing of the updated foreign investment promotion and protection agreement between our countries in May 2009 indicates Canada's interest in deepening its trade relationship with Latvia. In particular, there is potential for growth in capital projects, agriculture and agri-food, and environmental industries.

Understandably, as trade between Canada and Latvia continues to grow, ports will play an increasingly important role. It is vital that we work together and share best practices in order to maximize the contribution that ports make to our respective economies.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Latvian delegation for the warm hospitality we have enjoyed, and to stress that – as parliamentarians – we must do our part in fostering bilateral relations. Mayor Lembergs, thank you for hosting this luncheon, which affords us an opportunity to pursue our discussion in a convivial atmosphere.