

**SPEAKING NOTES  
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA  
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**AT A LUNCHEON HOSTED BY THE SECRETARY OF  
THE LATVIAN SAEIMA**

**LATVIA  
2010**

Your Excellency Secretary Rasnacs,  
Honourable Parliamentarians,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of all members of our delegation, I want to begin by telling you that we are very pleased to be with you today.

Secretary Rasnacs, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you especially for hosting this luncheon. In light of your distinguished political career, including your time as the Minister of Justice, we expect that you will be in a position to provide us with great insight into the issues of greatest interest and concern in Latvia. We are privileged to learn about your country's judicial system from someone with your lengthy experience and unique perspective.

Our two countries face a number of similar challenges. The recent financial crisis and economic downturn have led to hardships in some industries which we have in common. That is one reason why our visit here is so very important. By helping each of us understand the other, exchanges such as this play a valuable role in fulfilling our responsibility as parliamentarians.

These exchanges enable us to share information and experiences at a time when innovation is particularly important. This knowledge will help us in making the best possible decisions to ensure the future prosperity of both our nations. Canadian parliamentarians are eager to play their part in assisting the smooth evolution of our bilateral relationship to the benefit of all.

Since Latvia joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004, our relationship has had an added dimension: each of our countries has troops

deployed in Afghanistan. Canadians have always believed that international cooperation can be instrumental in ensuring stability in the world. There are, of course, no guarantees. That is why long-term commitments – not only through international organizations, but also at the bilateral level – are very important. By working together, we can ensure that our relationship develops harmoniously.

This May, Latvia will host the 2010 Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Hundreds of participants will gather here to engage in serious discussions on topics such as the unity of the Atlantic Alliance, maritime safety, and relations between NATO and Russia. These biennial sessions facilitate parliamentary awareness of key security issues and are important for the maintenance of a strong transatlantic relationship.

It is particularly significant that, like us, the participants of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly will have the opportunity to discuss common concerns in Latvia's beautiful capital, Riga. The city's historic centre was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its unparalleled architecture. While Riga is certainly full of history, its industrial, financial and commercial centres represent the extraordinary progress that Latvia has made since declaring independence in 1991. Thanks to your hospitality, we have gained a new appreciation for Latvian culture.

I would like to close by once more expressing sincere gratitude to our host, Secretary Rasnacs, for taking the time to meet with us today. On behalf of my Canadian colleagues, I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.