

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF A DINNER HOSTED BY
THE HONOURABLE GUNDARS DAUDZE
SPEAKER OF THE LATVIAN SAEIMA**

Your Excellency Speaker Daudze,
Honourable Parliamentarians,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of our entire delegation, I would like to begin by thanking our host for this wonderful dinner. Your Excellency, you and your staff have made this evening a memorable one, as well as ensuring that our visit to Latvia is both productive and enjoyable.

This visit is part of a series of exchanges between our two parliaments, which I am pleased to say are occurring regularly. In May 2008 we welcomed you to our nation's capital, Ottawa. On this reciprocal visit, we are eager to benefit from your experience and learn more about Latvia's recent achievements.

Your country has made remarkable strides over the last several years. In a short time Latvia acceded to both the World Trade Organization and the European Union, as well as becoming a more immediate ally of Canada in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Canada was the first country of the G7 to ratify the protocols permitting Latvia to join NATO

Canada is proud to say that it was one of the very first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Latvia after regaining independence. Since then, contacts between our two countries have expanded on a number of levels.

Among other things, Canada has provided training for the Latvian military. These training opportunities have borne fruit as we serve together in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). In addition, Canada provided assistance to help Latvia develop a more effective public sector and an improved language training programme.

Our economic relationship has also expanded over the last several years, with trade between our two nations growing steadily. Unfortunately, no country has been immune from the recent economic downturn, but through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, we are working to overcome this crisis.

In May 2009, Canada and Latvia strengthened our mutual commitment to economic cooperation by signing an updated Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement.

This two-way investment agreement is an encouraging sign that bilateral relationships such as ours will help us travel down the path to recovery together. Our economies will persevere, we will continue to trade and invest in each other, and we will move forward.

In addition to commercial ties, our two countries are encouraging the formation of personal ties. To this end, in 2006 Canada and Latvia signed an Agreement on Youth Mobility. This will encourage young Canadians and Latvians to visit each other's country by creating new opportunities for them through work and travel.

Thanks to exchanges such as this, our parliamentary relations are also on a good footing. In the Canadian Parliament, relations are aided by the work of the Canada–NATO Parliamentary Association, the Inter–Parliamentary Union, and the Canada–Europe Parliamentary Association. In the Saeima, I am pleased to note that the Latvia–Canada interparliamentary cooperation group was established in 2002.

These dialogues speak to the mutual friendship between our countries. Today, over 28,000 Canadians claim Latvian roots. While they have integrated into Canadian society, they have also maintained a strong sense of Latvian identity through their membership in clubs and other social institutions.

In closing, Speaker Daudze, on behalf of the Senate of Canada, I would like to thank you and your colleagues once again for your generous hospitality. We look forward to future opportunities to strengthen the linkages between our countries, our people, and our parliaments.