

**Speech of Deputy Speaker Željko Reiner on the occasion of the celebration
of Canada Day**

Thursday, July 4th, 2019, 18:30, Arheološki muzej

Honourable Ambassador Maksymiuk,
Honourable Members of the Parliament and Government,
Distinguished ambassadors,
Dear guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is truly an honour to be here with you today on the occasion of the celebration of Canada Day but also to celebrate friendship between our two countries.

Allow me to warmly greet you on behalf of the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Gordan Jandroković, and myself.

Croatia and Canada are bonded with strong ties. Our two countries are connected by true friendship and mutual respect. We strive and fight for democracy, rule of law, human rights and freedoms, and we are continuously working on creating sustainable economies while protecting the environment and fighting climate changes.

Canada was one of the first countries that recognized the independence of Croatia in 1992, and we would like to show you our appreciation by constantly emphasizing the values of our true friendship.

The most important bridge that connects our two countries is a vast Croatian diaspora in Canada. Canada is a home to one of the largest Croatian communities outside of Republic of Croatia. We are extremely proud of the Croatian community, which, with no doubt, contributes to Canada's overall development and represents a strong bond between our two countries.

Our parliamentary ties are also excellent. Our two speakers of the parliaments frequently exchange visits. Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Gordan Jandroković visited Canada in 2017., and Speaker of the House of Commons of the Parliament of Canada Mr. Geoff Regan visited Croatia a few months ago.

But the crown of our bilateral relations was the visit of Croatian President Grabar Kitarović to Canada this May. We can all agree that visits like these contribute to our cooperation on all levels.

Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is the most ambitious and most progressive free trade agreement ever signed by the two parties included: EU and Canada. Croatian Parliament ratified the Agreement on June 30th 2017, two years ago, as the third EU member state, and I am proud of my role in this.

I believe this agreement is particularly important for small and medium enterprises that will save both time and money while dealing with bureaucracy. Thanks to CETA new opportunities for European farmers and food producers will open, and a better mobility for workers will be granted. Croatia's benefits from CETA could be huge.

When it comes to tourism, we are happy that 25 percent more Canadian tourist visited Croatia last year, mostly due to establishing of direct airlines. We hope this number will increase even more, starting with this upcoming season.

I am also proud of my role in ratification in Croatian Parliament of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between EU and Canada in 2018, when Croatia was the tenth EU member state to ratify it.

Canada and Croatia are friends and allies, and I believe growing partnership in the political and the economic field will help us to decrease the geographical distance between our countries.

Finally, allow me to quote a great Canadian writer Lucy Maud Montgomery: *"True friends are always together in spirit"*. Croatia and Canada are connected in the spirits, in the minds and in the businesses of our peoples, and we must do our best to cherish and to preserve our true friendship.

Thank you and happy Canada Day!