

Dublin: 2011-02-28

Canada welcomes scores of new arrivals to our shores as Ireland luckily experiences a democratic revolution of sorts that could well have been more like the ongoing violent revolutions we are witnessing throughout Africa and the Middle East. Saner minds have prevailed in old Hibernia and the people have spoken through the ballot box by turfing the government of too many days and decades, and opting for a new regime that hopefully will not betray the people it serves like too many of the *Teachta Dála's* (Irish Parliamentarians) before them.

This new Government will be looked upon with jaundiced eye by an electorate that has been lied to, swindled, cheated and taken for granted. Ireland's hapless Fianna Fail Party have once again proven Lord Acton's maxim that "All power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely". If any other party had been in power as long as Fianna Fail, perhaps we may also have had similar outcomes. We'll never know.

Thus, Fine Gael returns to power for the first time since 1997. Ireland's new Taoiseach, Enda Kenny (Prime Minister / Chieftain), a decent Mayo man of impeccable character and sense of civic duty can expect the briefest of honeymoons of any man that ever took the reins at Leinster House. Taoiseach's Haughey, Ahern and most recently Cowen took care of that.

While the Taoiseach faces immense challenges with the financial mess he has inherited, he also has a mandate and a huge opportunity, once and for all to change the face of Irish politics, from working for the good of the politicians, to working for the good of the people.

We wish him and his coalition partners all the best in the challenging months ahead and hope that the opposition will also look to the greater good of the Irish people and place partisanship on the sidelines. History will look upon 2011 as a milestone where Ireland had the opportunity of heading in a direction for the sustainable good of her people or once again heading up the dead end *bóithrín* of cronyism, *me feinism* and greed that got the nation where it is today. What will they choose?

Toronto: 2011-02-28

As the new government settles into the business at hand a new generation of Irish immigrants

settles into a new land - The Land of the Maple Leaf.

Like many in the past, they didn't leave because they wanted to - they left because they had to leave. This is nothing new one might say. What is new is that they shouldn't have had to leave. As Fintan O'Toole in his recent book, *Ship of Fools - How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* reveals, "the Irish government (of the day) deregulated and all but abandoned financial oversight and a great financial ceilidh began". The new wave of Irish immigrants are now suffering from the inevitable outcome of such negligence and they along with their families left behind and indeed generations to come, will continue to suffer from this mother of all financial hangovers that would even have kept King Solomon awake at night.

The Irish brain drain tsunami is well underway and Toronto along with many of Canada's major cities are the beneficiaries of Ireland's woes. It is a bittersweet moment in time, especially here in Toronto where a greying Irish community is eager to welcome with open arms a new generation. It is a time for us old soldiers to pass the baton to the new recruits and to help them in anyway we can to settle in to their new home.

The upcoming photo on page thirteen helps us to put faces to this new wave of young Irish immigrants. They are faces full of hope and aspirations and a can do attitude that will undoubtedly have a collective positive affect on their adopted country and indeed the Irish Diaspora already here.

The open arms and generosity of the Irish Canadian Diaspora was nowhere more evident than on a cold January evening (January 18th) when over 350 new arrivals descended on Grace O'Malley's on Duncan Street, just a few blocks from where the Famine Irish perished in the fever sheds in 1847. Over 160 years later, this new crop of Irish immigrants that are well educated, talented and able to hold their own with the very best from around the globe, received a warm welcome from the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce. The message from Chamber President, Cormac Monaghan spoke to the fact that "the Chamber and many other community groups were potentially a strong resource in terms of social networks and employment search while the new arrivals resided in Toronto. Many of the older Irish in Toronto benefited over the years from a helping hand from a fellow immigrant and so the cycle continues".

The Chamber's New Arrivals Committee under the leadership of Declan Treacy, a recent immigrant from County Fermanagh (2008), assembled a roster of very interesting and helpful speakers. Also in attendance were representatives from companies that were either hiring / recruitment agencies or immigration consultants. Networking was the order of the evening and it would appear that many of the new arrivals made some good connections - the whole reason for the exercise. At last count over 25 people had secured positions as a result of attending the evening and that number grows daily as the networking continues.

In addition to this event (the second of its kind since June), the Chamber followed up with an Immigration Seminar in mid February and the possibility of additional seminars are currently being investigated. The Chamber through the good offices of Gilaroo.com continues to host the very popular website Declan Treacy developed exclusively for the new arrivals to post their CV's where companies can find a wealth of new Irish talent. To date many companies and candidates have been the beneficiaries of www.irishjobs.ca.

The Irish Cultural Society of Toronto (ICST) under the leadership of Norita Fleming (the 2011 Irish Person of the Year) has initiated **Welcome Sundays** at the Emerald Isle Seniors Centre at 1190 Danforth Avenue (at Greenwood) starting at 3:00pm. Upcoming dates are March 27th

and May 1st

. This will give the new arrivals an opportunity to come out and meet members of the many Irish organizations and connect with some kindred spirits that will help them settle in their new home. This is not a new role for the ICST whose original incarnation was the Irish Immigrant Aid Society of Toronto established in 1967 to help an earlier wave of new immigrants. As a community we still miss the old Irish Centre owned by the organization at 1650 Dupont Street.

The Toronto Gaelic Athletic Association has also been to the fore in welcoming the new arrivals

who no doubt will swell the ranks of the many vibrant GAA clubs in the GTA. Toronto GAA President, Mark O'Brien, left no doubt that his organization had the red carpet out for the new arrivals and he vowed that the many tentacles of the GAA would be mobilised to help in networking and job hunting.

Everywhere this writer goes these days across this great city I find a great empathy for the new arrivals and a willingness to help whether that help is being offered by individuals, companies or organizations - it's grassroots community building at its finest, and long may it continue.

But, even all the goodwill that this community can muster will not meet the immediate or long term need of this huge influx to our community. Hence we are turning our eyes and aspirations back to Dublin and to the new Government to provide the help and services that should be at least equivalent to other Irish immigrant hubs around the globe. For far too long the Irish Diaspora in Canada has been ignored by successive Irish Governments. Thankfully recent and current Ambassadors recognized that early in their tenures and we feel the winds of change are gathering the required momentum to change this historic inequity.

Dublin: 2011-03-01

By 8:00 am today the Irish Grants Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs at 80 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, will have received a Grant Application co-authored by the Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce, the Ireland Fund of Canada, the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Cultural Society of Toronto. The Grant Application in support of a Toronto Irish Immigration Centre calls on the Government of Taoiseach Enda Kenny to approve funding in the immediate future for an immigration service in downtown Toronto that is needed now, not next year. At present, there are many more Irish immigrants arriving in Toronto and Vancouver, than there are to more traditional Irish centres like Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, etc. However, unlike these other cities, there is no corresponding infrastructure in existence within the Irish community in Canada to help with this influx. Through the generosity of the Ireland Fund of Canada, the aforementioned organisations have secured suitable premises, right in the heart of central Toronto and are ready to hit the ground running.

Assuming the funding is forthcoming, the estimated number who could potentially benefit from the service will be 10,000-15,000. They will benefit from on the ground access to advice on immigration. This is particularly important as many of the recently arrived immigrants are on the one-two year working holiday visa, and having found employment are anxious to explore their

options to stay for a longer period. They will also have a valuable first port of call when they arrive in Toronto, in terms of getting advice on settling in Canada. The Centre will help them integrate into the local community while retaining their links with home. In the future the Centre will also be a valuable resource to the Embassy in Ottawa.

It is envisaged that the suitably qualified professional Executive Director (E.D.) of the Toronto Irish Immigration Centre will assist newly arrived emigrants in linking up with existing Irish organisations in the city, liaise with the Canadian federal and provincial authorities on immigration matters and provide up to date information on these issues. New arrivals will also be assisted in researching job opportunities and on practical issues relating to settling in Canada. The main areas of focus will be employment, accommodation and immigration. The Centre will also engage in fundraising so that it will make a greater contribution over time towards its own costs. The E.D. will also liaise with the Embassy in Ottawa.

The symbol of the candle burning in the window of *Áras an Uachtaráin* as a welcome home to the emigrant is a welcoming symbol from the days of President Robinson that will always be cherished by Ireland's Diaspora. However, realistically it is going to be a long time before this current wave can hope to return. In the meantime, the request to the Irish Government is both prudent and realistic and in the long term a very good investment.

It is this writer's belief, that the people of Ireland who continue to suffer through financial hardship at home, would not begrudge the funding necessary to help the new arrivals to Canada. After all, most households have reluctantly sent us one of their sons, daughters, relatives or friends.

This community will not be found wanting in our efforts to help *na daoine nua* (the new people), however, we can help them a lot more with some funding that will be transparently administered to the letter of the law.

Having arrived in this great country thirty five years ago I can still feel the pangs of immigration, albeit in tandem with a deeply rooted love and passion for my adopted home in the Land of the Maple Leaf. The feelings of the new immigrant were and still are enshrined in the ***Song from the Backwoods***

by T.D. O' Sullivan in 1857 when he penned the following lines:

Canada Welcomes New Arrivals as Ireland Welcomes a New Government

Written by Eamonn O'Loughlin - Last Updated Thursday, 03 March 2011 12:48

"Deep in Canadian woods we've met,

From one bright island flown;

Great is the land we tread, but yet

Our hearts are with our own".

Irish Connections Canada looks forward to keeping our community informed on the progress of this project. With everyone's help and dare I say, your advocacy, it can become a reality.



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Veni Vidi... Agus le cunamh De... Vici