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Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CONOR BARRY



MEET IRELAND'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO CANADA

In what was a minor coup for the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce in Montreal, the newly appointed Irish Ambassador to Canada, Jamaica and the Bahamas, **Dr Eamonn McKee**, took time out of his busy schedule on 4 November to hold a wide-ranging video conference with members.

Speaking from the Ambassador's residence in Ottawa, Dr McKee was seated in front of an impressive painting of the Céide Fields on the Mayo coast and with the tricolour standing in view over his left shoulder. But as formal as his surroundings were, the Dubliner cut a relaxed figure as he spoke knowledgeably about Canada, Ireland and the global economic picture, touching on a number of important issues, including trade, 'Global Ireland', Brexit, COVID-19 and even the recent results of rugby's Six Nations Championship.

A career diplomat, Dr McKee is no stranger to North America having holidayed in Quebec and other parts of Canada previously, while also having previously served at the Irish Embassy in Washington D.C. and the Consulate in New York.

Educated at University College Dublin, Ambassador McKee comes to Canada having collected diverse and extensive experience since joining the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1986. In addition to D.C. and NYC, he served stints in the Anglo-Irish Division and the United Nations before securing his first Ambassador gig as Ireland's man in the Korean peninsula from 2009-13. He was then stationed in Tel Aviv for two years as the Ambassador to Israel before being appointed Director General of the Trade Division, a tenure that included preparing for Ireland's participation at Expo Dubai, now postponed until 2021.

This strong recent background in trade is something that should interest member organizations of the ICCC as Dr McKee clearly has a knowledge of and interest in business and commerce, no doubt now with an eye on ensuring Irish enterprise can continue to thrive on this side of the Atlantic. Coupled with Enterprise Ireland's plans to open an office in Montreal next year, his appointment should be seen by all in this neck of the woods as a very positive move.

This newsletter is being published as coronavirus is still creating uncertainty in all our lives. The ICCC, along with all other businesses and organizations, has had to adjust to the new reality. We have cancelled all our in-person events and have gone online. I would like to thank Paul Dunne and Michelle Sullivan who have been sending regular updates to our members on the various Government initiatives that have been put in place to help businesses through this period. Our spring newsletter also went online.

Our AGM this year took place on Zoom for the first time. As reported at the AGM, the Chamber is in a very strong position. Our goals over the coming year include revamping our website, increasing our social media activity, further developing our relationship with other chambers across Canada and continuing to offer our members interesting and relevant activities.

In this newsletter, I touch on two events that took place since our last newsletter in the spring. Ambassador Jim Kelly finished his term in Ottawa this summer and moved to New York. Jim was a great supporter of the Chamber and I thank him for his great support during his time here. On a sadder note, Michael Hurley, the former Deputy Head of Mission in Ottawa, passed away this spring in Beijing. Michael was a gentleman, and his passing is a huge loss. My sincere condolences to Michael's family. (See page 2).

President's Message cont.

On a more positive note, I am delighted to welcome the new Irish Ambassador to Canada Dr. Eamonn McKee. We are greatly looking forward to working with him. We had a great Zoom meet with the new Ambassador and we thank him for his time. This allowed us to introduce the Chamber to the new Ambassador and for him to outline his objectives for his term in Canada. We will be scheduling more of these zoom meetings over the next year and we are currently working on having guests that our members will find interesting and provocative. In December, our guest will be Jean Charest, the former premier of Quebec and a great supporter of our activities.

Our mission is to foster trade and commerce between Ireland and Canada and to promote our members' business interests. We are working hard to do this but we need your support. If you can contribute your time and skills, we can certainly use your help. Please reach out to us. In the meantime, please stay safe and support members of the Chamber's companies.

AMBASSADOR FACT FILE**Education:**

1978 BA (hons) at University College Dublin
1987 Ph.D at National University of Ireland

Career:

1986-89: 3rd Secretary, Anglo-Irish Division
1990-94: Political Officer, Embassy Washington DC
1994-96: Press Officer, Embassy Washington DC
1996-99: First Secretary, Justice and Security Section, Anglo-Irish Division
1999-01: Press Officer, Consulate General New York
2002-05: Counsellor, Justice and Security Section, Anglo-Irish Division
2005-06: Counsellor, Emergency and Humanitarian Unit, Development Cooperation Division
2006-09: UN Director and Founder Director Conflict Resolution Unit
2009-13: Ambassador, Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea
2013-15: Ambassador, Israel
2015-20: Director General Trade Division
2018-20: Director General, Ireland at Expo Dubai 2020
2020: Ambassador to Canada, Jamaica and the Bahamas

Personal:

- Married to Mary McGillis-McKee (former congressional aide in Washington D.C.), three grown-up children and a cat
- Interests include cycling, running, hiking, rugby, reading and writing
- Rebooting his Leaving Cert French with some lessons and
- Looking forward to visiting Montreal for some real poutine

AMBASSADOR TO CANADA

(continued from page 1)

"There have been some very encouraging business developments between Ireland and Canada in recent years," he told ICCC members via video link, with President Conor Barry asking the questions. "We have Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the IDA in Toronto with EI about to set up in Montreal and also the work of the various chambers of commerce around Canada is absolutely essential because of how they connect with people.

"We have CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement) and some really important advancements. A lot of the credit goes to my predecessor, Jim Kelly, and others for their hard work in building the platform, which led to 23 high-level visits from Ireland since 2017, including two Taoisigh. That really gives you a great basis on which to develop the relationship.

"We've seen a 27% increase in trade between Canada and the EU since 2017. We want to build on that improvement. By removing barriers to trade such as double-testing of electronic goods, the removal of tariffs, harmonization of standards and so on, CETA allows us to do that. It's a great opportunity for Irish companies to look to Canada and for Canadian countries to look to Ireland – and not just to Ireland for its own sake but also to use Ireland as a platform in the EU. Now that Britain is leaving, Ireland has a number of attractions. We will be the only English-speaking country in the EU, our business roots are in the Commonwealth system, culturally and in business terms we are very similar so there are all these very positive things that are creating opportunities for us... There are 40 big Canadian companies investing in Ireland right now and I would expect that to grow."

The reasons behind this relatively recent blossoming of Irish-Canadian relations are manifold with Dr McKee referencing the wave of Irish immigrants coming to Montreal and the rest of Canada in the wake of the financial crisis from 2007.

"I think the peace process has helped as

well. The visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland in 2011 and then the Irish President Michael D Higgins visiting Britain in 2014, in a way stitched up some wounds and normalized relations with the Crown and that has removed a niggling uncertainty of how we should approach Canada. It took something complicated out of the equation. Ireland and Canada share so many values in terms of rule of law, multilateralism, human rights and so on and a big part of that is the Irish heritage in Canada."

Underlining that point, ICCC President Barry pointed out that 40% of Canadians claiming Irish ancestry is a higher proportion than those in the USA.

"Absolutely," responded the Ambassador, "one of Canada's founding fathers, Thomas D'Arcy McGee (born in Carlingford, County Louth) set a vision for Canada that is still in place today – an acceptance of diversity."

Fresh off the boat himself, Dr. McKee is using his first few weeks in office to meet Canadian officials and starting work on bilateral and multilateral initiatives, although the COVID-19 situation is not making things easier for him.

"The big drawback for me during COVID is not being able to meet people," he said. "It is great to have an extensive contact network so that when something comes along, whether that is a problem or an opportunity, you can go and ring someone up and there is nothing to compare to face-to-face relationships. We just have to adapt to new ways of working.

"I really want to get to know the Irish community, to reach out to them and making sure we are aware of the issues – the immigrant experience is often a very difficult one. For example, at the moment with COVID if you're in the hospitality section you might find you're out of a job. We really appreciate the support offered by the Irish community here and we support them through, for example, the Emigrant Support Fund, which has been a critical

NEW AMBASSADOR TO CANADA

(continued from page 2)

and flexible resource for people to call upon if they need it.”

And he has a reassuring word for anyone concerned that foreign mission budgets might suffer in the context of a COVID recession.

“The word I got back from headquarters is that support for ‘Global Ireland’ is undiminished at the most senior level of the Taoiseach and Tánaiste and Minister. This is really great news because it is an investment in our resilience and adaptability. We’ve seen with COVID that you need resilient supply chains and market diversification.”

With COVID-19 and the U.S. presidential election continuing to dominate the news cycles these days, people may have forgotten about the other moose in the sugar shack, Brexit. As you would expect from a career diplomat, the Ambassador is, well, diplomatic when it comes to discussing this complex and thorny issue.

“Both sides are working on it,” he said hopefully, “which is great because that hasn’t always been the case. They are still working on the issues. I think everyone wants to avoid any kind of chaos. And working on World Trade Organization rules. We want as close an economic position with Britain as possible. It’s a big economy and very important to Ireland and the rest of the EU. The economic reality is that trade halves as distance doubles. You trade with your local partners. That’s the reality. We just must make sure that we avoid complications on the island of Ireland and around the border.”

To illustrate this point, he uses an example we can all relate to – if all else fails, there is always a Guinness analogy.

“If, for example, we revert to WHO rules, we would have a huge problem with rules of origin because Guinness, for example, is made in Dublin, trucked up to Belfast, put into cans and brought back again. So, under rules of origin, would that pass as an EU good? Same with milk, same with other goods, on and on it goes. Preserving a good economic relationship with Britain is so important to everyone. Hopefully common sense prevails.

“With the loss of Britain, new European alliances will have to be formed. Ireland and the UK shared a lot of common values and were well aligned on many things. Both pro-business, pro-globalization, pro-mobile capital and investment. We do share common ground with some of the Nordic nations, with Benelux and so on. We will certainly miss Britain as a member of the EU, there’s no doubt about that. But the EU knows it must be flexible and Ireland is committed to its position within the EU – that’s the right call and you can see it in our exports. We are showing resilience and we are definitely stronger within the EU.”



Dr Eamonn McKee, Ireland’s Ambassador to Canada

The Ambassador is eagerly anticipating the opportunity to get out and fully explore the territory his remit includes, which of course is not just Canada but the Bahamas and Jamaica, too. One to reserve for January or February perhaps?

“Far be it from me to speculate that that’s why they were added onto the job but yes, it might be nice to head down there in winter. Of course, there is great Irish heritage in Jamaica. We have a good Irish community there and also in the Bahamas. It’s not an unattractive dimension to the brief, I would have to say.”

A keen rugby fan, it is not yet clear if he will be donning his sheepskin coat and wellies, and heading down to watch Ottawa Irish RFC but he did enjoy the resumption of the Six Nations, albeit in its unfamiliar November slot and albeit Ireland were soundly beaten by France in Paris.

“It was good to see the Six Nations back. When it comes to Irish rugby, I live in perpetual hope. I admire them greatly for how they have adapted to the modern game. Sometimes, they are amazing and other times... yeah well [trails off]. That’s the joy of sport – you never know what’s going to happen.”

Like I said, he’s a career diplomat.



Outgoing Ambassador leaves Ottawa to take up a pivotal role for Ireland at the U.N.



Jim Kelly finished up his four-year term as Ireland's Ambassador to Canada this summer. He has since moved to New York to take on the exciting and high-profile role as Ambassador to the United Nations as Ireland starts its term on the Security Council.

On behalf of the board of the Chamber I would like to formally thank Jim for his excellent term in Ottawa. I hope he leaves Canada with great memories of a beautiful country and its warm and generous people. I was delighted to have been President of the Chamber for the last three years while Jim was Ambassador. He was incredibly supportive of all our activities over the past several years. Travelling four hours in a snowstorm to attend our Christmas party in 2018 was above and beyond the call of duty – no right-thinking Canadian would do that! But Jim had promised me he would come, and he honoured his commitment.

The increase in Ireland's diplomatic footprint in Canada over the past couple of years is testimony to Jim's leadership. During his term as Ambassador, a new Honorary Counsel was appointed in Vancouver, the IDA opened an office in Toronto and Enterprise Ireland announced the opening of an office here in Montreal. I have no doubt that his efforts will ensure that economic and cultural ties between Ireland and Canada will continue to thrive.

A proud Dubliner, Jim is a passionate supporter of the Dublin Gaelic football team. Every year I used to look forward to seeing him on Twitter sitting in Croke Park in his Dublin jersey as the Blues won another All Ireland title! But he wore Dublin's success fairly lightly and didn't remind us non-Dubs too much about it. Jim and his deputy, Michael Hurley, made a formidable team in Ottawa. They were open, engaged and worked tirelessly to promote Ireland's best interests in Canada. Both countries are better off for this.

Best of Luck in New York, Jim. We will miss you. Thanks for your great service while in Canada and bon voyage!

Popular diplomat will be sadly missed in Canada and beyond



As you are probably aware, the former Deputy Head of the Irish Mission in Ottawa, Michael Hurley, passed away this spring in Beijing. His passing, after a short illness, came as a shock to his friends and family in Ireland and here in Canada.

I had the pleasure of working closely with Michael over the past several years. I called him last year when he was finishing his stint in Ottawa to wish him a safe trip back to Ireland. He laughed as he told me that he had just been offered the position of Deputy Head of Mission in Beijing, so the moving truck diverted to Beijing instead of Dublin.

Michael was a career diplomat. As well as having been based in Ottawa, he also served in Madrid, Brussels, the Hague and Beijing. Michael was great to deal with and every request, whether big or small, was never a problem for him. He was an affable, relaxed person, a musician, a sports fan, and an all-round nice guy. We both bonded over hockey. Michael and I both had sons who played and we both came late to the game. Neither of us, it is fair to say, fully understood the rules but we both suffered through the long winters in hockey rinks like other parents and grew to love it. My last contact with Michael was when he tweeted a picture of his son, James, playing for the Beijing Warriors hockey team. I asked him if they were better than the Senators. As was his way, he took it in good humour.

On behalf of the Chamber, I extend our sincere condolences to Michael's wife, Anne Marie, his family, colleagues and many friends in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam. May he Rest in Peace.



COVID-19 and the growing need for dual-source supply chains

With lessons learned from the pandemic, Northern Ireland is poised to become a location of choice for advanced pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing.

The global response to COVID-19 has been awe-inspiring, with the life sciences industry rising to address this once-in-a-century challenge.

I am particularly proud of Northern Ireland's contributions during the crisis. Our manufacturing sector quickly pivoted and is punching above its weight developing COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE), testing, diagnostics, and medical equipment. In one such example, County Antrim's Randox Laboratories worked alongside Bosch to develop a rapid test in less than six weeks. It's one of the world's first fully automated molecular diagnostic tests and can detect a SARS-CoV-2 infection in under 2.5 hours.

The pandemic will profoundly and permanently change the life sciences sector, and one shift evolving in real time is the re-evaluation of global supply chains. Exploring the potential benefits of near-shoring and dual-source pipelines has become a priority to preserve the manufacturing and distribution of critical pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and supplies.

In this context, Northern Ireland is poised to expand its global impact as a location of choice for second-source manufacturing.

With science-driven manufacturing, a long history of advanced engineering and manufacturing excellence, and a time zone centrally located between major global markets, Northern Ireland offers many advantages for companies looking to grow while diversifying and safeguarding their supply chains.

The Northern Ireland workforce is highly educated, English-speaking, and provides a talented pool to draw from, with both Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast recognized as bioscience leaders. Our workers have adapted to working remotely and are supported by infrastructure necessary for effective digital operations. Operating costs are on average 20–30% lower than the rest of the UK and Europe. Salary costs are approximately 50% less than in the United States, but with science workers maintaining an excellent quality of life.

Companies investing in the region can access expertise and grants for product development, employment, training, and R&D. For life and health science companies in particular, R&D and manufacturing activities within Northern Ireland have remained robust throughout the pandemic, thanks to our infrastructure and ability to manage our own COVID-19 measures outside of the wider UK and EU response. This has enabled companies to maintain and even enhance their competitive position on a global stage.

Many international companies have realized the opportunities offered by this low-risk, pro-business environment. In 2019,

investment in Northern Ireland grew by more than 60%, the largest increase ever, and the current pipeline continues to grow. More and more, despite or perhaps because of COVID-19, we are hearing from interesting life science and pharmaceutical companies looking for the right place to develop healthcare products and technologies.

Our universities, companies, regulatory authorities, and healthcare systems are highly connected and collaborate intimately in a way that doesn't happen in larger countries or less integrated areas of a similar size. Pharma companies operating in Northern Ireland can support all aspects of the development cycle, from discovery through preclinical and clinical research to commercial manufacturing and life cycle management.

Key to this is the direct link to the UK's National Health Service, one of the world's largest and most respected health services, and Northern Ireland's data-driven, "closed loop" healthcare system, which has electronic health records for the population of 1.88 million, covering all phases of life.

Longitudinal data of this scope exists in very few places and offers opportunities for comparative efficacy research and data mining. Through ethical collaboration agreements, researchers can access this information to find ideal patient pools, even for more complicated diseases, creating an ideal environment for the co-creation, testing, evidence generation, and adoption of healthcare innovations.

Northern Ireland's two major universities, Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast, offer globally competitive research expertise, including 17 research centers between them, and an excellent track record in commercializing technologies.

The more than 250 life and health sciences companies operating in Northern Ireland take advantage of this ecosystem, including global names like Randox, Almac, Norbrook, Stryker, G&L Scientific, and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries. Small and medium-sized enterprises are an integral part of the cluster as well, including ProAxis, Exploristics, Cirdan Imaging, CV6 Therapeutics, Fusion Antibodies, Intelesens, Kainos, Diaceutics, and AxisBioServices.

Together, companies of all sizes are focused on advancing pharma, diagnostics, precision medicine, connected health, and medical devices. This dedication has bred success, with the industry generating a turnover of more than \$1.41 billion in 2019 and employing more than 8,500 people.

There are also emerging cross-sector strengths in areas like AI and data analytics and existing expertise in areas like cybersecurity and software development. The intersection of so many fields, made possible because of the manageable size of the business environment, breeds innovation.

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Out of conflict, toward a winning culture

Using experience gained during Northern Ireland's dark past and post-conflict emergence, TOWARD is an innovative executive and team coaching firm that is entering the Canadian market to transform organizations facing leadership development challenges into productive, highly motivated and healthy places to work.

Headquartered in Belfast, TOWARD Ltd provides executive coaching, team coaching and leadership development programmes for senior leaders and teams in organizations around the world.



Founder Johnny Parks created the company following his career as first, an accomplished musician, and then as director of a charity in Northern Ireland that advocated for the rights of disaffected young people. Among his responsibilities, Parks led residential sessions for young people from socially deprived areas to support them in engaging more productively in life, and to build cross-community relations in Northern Ireland's post-conflict society.

The emergence of a philosophy of supporting people to clarify what they wanted in life and move toward it, birthed the idea for a more corporate offering.

Parks said: "I wanted to instigate significant, positive change and it seemed like an appropriate

audience for instigating that change were people in positions of senior leadership in large organizations."

TOWARD has been providing transformational coaching and leadership development for senior leaders and teams from global organizations for nearly 15 years. The core team includes Caroline Duffy, one of Ireland's most respected executive coaches with more than 20 years' experience as a management consultant, facilitator and coach. Paul McKenzie, with a background in professional rugby and sport psychology, heads up the design and delivery of many of TOWARD's large-scale, global programs. The wider delivery team includes author and peacebuilder, Tony Macaulay, who has released a series of best-selling memoirs chronicling life growing up in Belfast during the Troubles.

It is this variety of background, experience and viewpoint that Parks believes is at the core of TOWARD's offering. He said: "We have associates and coaches in Ireland, the UK and some a little further afield into Europe and beyond. We have psychotherapists, managing directors of international peace-building organizations, and many others with their own coaching and consulting practices. This diversity allows us to match the right team with the right client."

TOWARD has coached executives from the likes of the Royal Bank of Scotland, Allen & Overy, and Cambridge Judge Business School (part of the University of Cambridge).



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Out of conflict, toward a winning culture

It has coached executive teams in companies with global footprints and employee numbers in the hundreds of thousands and has delivered leadership and culture programmes in the Philippines, India, the USA and Central America.

Duffy added: “Perhaps it has something to do with our Celtic roots, but our work and approach have always been well received in North America! Our presence has grown there mainly through word of mouth. We thought it was time we became more intentional about expanding our network there.”

TOWARD has garnered a reputation for establishing relationships with clients, based on warmth and trust. However, they combine this with an astute ability to read a room and ask

Duffy said: “For numerous reasons, people can get hurt or feel let down in work. Relationships become low-quality and transactional, people play games, and team effectiveness and performance reduce. When we work with clients, we build psychological safety and resilience, and we elicit truthful conversations with leaders and teams about what really matters.”

The emphasis of many leadership development or coaching programmes is about promoting theoretical systems or models from the front. Participants on such programmes are often bombarded with literature and PowerPoint presentations. TOWARD, however, uses a knowledge-based, experiential form of delivery, providing participants with the opportunity to discuss, experiment with, reflect on, and apply whatever material they find useful.

McKenzie said: “When teams or individuals work with us, they will experience stimulation, laughter, challenge and insight. There will be moments of impatience and frustration, followed by movement, clarity and progress. It’s not about us at the front of the room downloading information but about engaging in an adult, reciprocal, social learning environment.”

TOWARD has overseen the transformation of organizations from unhappy and unproductive places to healthy and vibrant cultures. Parks said: “No one wakes up in the morning thinking,



challenging, incisive questions. Their aim as an organization is to create profound learning experiences for leaders and teams that support them to reach their true potential.

‘I want to be part of a dysfunctional team, organization or community’. People want to be a part of something productive, healthy and transformational. That’s where we come in - we can help them get there.”

TOWARD >

If you want to know more about TOWARD or you think there are ways you can help it establish a foothold in Canada, visit www.towardltd.com or email info@towardltd.com.



Brexit on the brink

As the UK pushes the EU to the limits of its patience, there is still no clarity as to what will happen on 1 January when this complex and, at times, bitter divorce is settled. The gulf is wide and time is short, writes Deirdre Clune MEP.

On October 17, 2019 the UK and the EU reached an agreement on the conditions for the UK's departure from the EU, and on a transition period until 31 December 2020. In December 2019 the UK Parliament finally voted to approve a Withdrawal Agreement (WA), the conditions under which the UK would leave the EU. The WA has been described as the divorce terms or settlement. Since the UK left the EU on January 31, 2020, we have been in the transition phase, meaning that while political Brexit has happened, in reality economic Brexit has not.

In December of this year the transition phase will end, by which time a future trading arrangement must be agreed. This is a very tight timeframe and the UK has ruled out any extension. The 27 European Heads of State and the European Parliament must agree and will need time to scrutinise any deal proposed.

Ireland is the EU member state that will be most affected by Brexit because of our historical relationship, our close economic ties and geographical location. Not only are trade ties threatened but also the hard-won peace and stability on our island.

The WA includes a protocol to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland and was the subject of intense negotiations. To quote the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen: "That agreement took three years to negotiate and we worked tirelessly on it. Line by line, word by word. And together we succeeded. The result guarantees our citizens' rights, financial interests, the integrity of the Single Market and – crucially – the Good Friday Agreement." The protocol requires that Northern Ireland follows EU rules on customs, VAT, state aid and standards. This is to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland. It does not sit well with Prime Minister Boris Johnson's promise that the UK would leave "whole and entire". But the reality is that he did agree to it and put it through the UK parliament in an expedited fashion. It was ratified by both the British and EU parliaments. Any deviation would be a breach of an obligation under international law.

The UK has ruled out joining the EU Single Market or a Customs Union so the focus is on developing a unique trade or economic arrangement. Prime Minister Johnson has said that he wants "a



Deirdre Clune, MEP with Michel Barnier

comprehensive free trade agreement similar to Canada's". The Comprehensive Economic Trade agreement (CETA) with Canada took seven years to negotiate; it removes almost all tariffs but they remain on poultry, meat and eggs. Some quotas have been increased but they were not eliminated while customs and VAT checks remain. The CETA deal does something for trade in services but nothing on financial services which have become so important to the City of London. A deal similar to Canada is unrealistic and would not work because of the unique geographical and economic proximity of the UK to the EU.

There is a growing sense of frustration and alarm on the EU side at the lack of progress. Speaking to a virtual audience in Dublin in September Michel Barnier, the Chief EU negotiator, said he was particularly worried and disappointed by the UK's lack of movement on three points:

- Firstly, there has been no engagement on the need to develop a level playing field, that is to ensure that there would be no distortion of competition through state aid and that common standards in areas such as social or environmental laws would be agreed. Simply put the UK cannot be given tariff and quota free access to a market of 445 million people without coherence of product quality and safety. This could undercut EU prices with potentially lower standards.

Brexit on the brink

- Secondly, the UK wants to “take back its waters” as regards fisheries. It is understandable that the U.K wants to become an independent coastal state. But those waters have provided a livelihood for Irish and European citizens involved in the fishing industry long before the UK joined the EEC and those livelihoods must be protected. And as a coastal nation there is a responsibility to ensure the protection and sustainability of those waters. Equally, the UK fishing industry benefits from the large export market that is the EU. The EU has proposed solutions that can provide balance and preserve natural resources but there has been no indication from the UK side as to how they want to move forward in this area.
- And thirdly, there is the need to develop a clear system of governance for dispute resolution. Ensuring that there is a well-defined mechanism to resolve any points of disagreement or contention in the future will be central to maintaining a good working relationship with the UK.

The gulf is wide and the time is short... very short. The Common Market and the freedoms it offers to the movement of people, goods and services without internal borders is regarded as one of Europe’s greatest achievements. This brainchild of Margaret Thatcher was hard fought for and will not be diluted. Indeed, it will be fiercely defended.

The European Union is a project of peace, cooperation and prosperity. The maintenance of that peace is the foundation on which the EU has been built. In 2012 the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution to “the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe”. The support for one of Europe’s smaller state has been strong and consistent. Ireland’s concerns are Europe’s concerns and the Good Friday Agreement, voted by referendum of the people North and South must be protected.



Martin Geoffrey Shaw – R.I.P.



We were very sad to learn that former ICC member, [Martin Geoffrey Shaw](#) passed away on September 17, 2020 at the age of 84.

Marty grew up as one of twenty-eight first cousins on Western Avenue (now Boul. de Maisonneuve) in Westmount in a vibrant local Irish community which included many notable Montreal Irish families.

Following a career in Executive search, Marty joined Executives Available (EA) as a counsellor and coach in 1997, having been a volunteer since its inception. (EA was founded in 1977 by Father Tom McEntee as a community response to support executives and management professionals in reintegrating into the workplace).

Marty is remembered by his EA colleagues as having a huge heart, a warming smile, an infectious sense of humour, a positive, generous, caring person “who makes you feel better just from talking to him”. In a “heart and soul” organization, Marty became its heart, soul and joie-de-vivre and it was his passion.

Over the years he counselled, guided and mentored thousands of members as they transitioned through very difficult personal circumstances. A measure of Marty’s commitment to helping others was the way he continued to support EA members into the last weeks of his life. We extend our deepest sympathies to his daughter Coleen, his sons Martin Jr., and Thomas, their spouses, his eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



All changed, changed utterly

As we face the prospect of a conventional recession, longer-term unemployment and lower tax receipts, Paul Dunne of JPDO Finance and Accounting examines how the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to affect us all well into 2021 and beyond.

The economic impact of COVID will end when a vaccine is developed but when that very important moment will arrive, we can't predict and even when it does, the likelihood that we will return to a pre-COVID normal during 2021 is slim. A vaccine will need to be safe, effective and universally available and I am among those who believe that a return to normal might take as long as five years. Most importantly, the normal we arrive at will not be the one we left. We are entering a new era. In the immortal words of W.B. Yeats, everything has "changed, changed utterly". Whether what is born is a terrible beauty or just plain terrible, remains to be seen.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

By the classic economic definition of a recession – two consecutive quarters of negative economic growth – most of the developed world is neck deep in what has been described as the worst recession since the Great Depression yet the unusually robust response of governments has ensured that the most harmful effects have been softened or deferred. Classic recessions generate very high levels of unemployment, depressing consumer spending and creating uncertainty. The reduction in consumer and investor confidence unleashes a spiral effect that stagnates economic activity and reduces tax intake. The Canadian government, like its counterparts in the developed economies, has stepped boldly onto the breach by offering temporary support to businesses and workers most affected by the pandemic crisis. The result has been to create an economic bubble inside which jobs are protected until the pandemic has passed.

Two main programs have underpinned this strategy, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) that has subsidized up to 75% of salaries for the worst hit businesses and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) for affected workers that paid a monthly benefit of \$2,000.

CEWS will continue until June 2021 but the benefit will fall to a maximum of 65%. An improved rental subsidy has been added, which will also be capped at 65% but can be increased to 90% for businesses subject to mandatory lockdown. CERB has been replaced by an improved Employment Insurance and the new Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) that will be available until September 2021.

There is an apparent government commitment to support the economy for "as long as it takes" but the levels of expenditure involved – the estimated budget deficit is projected to be

in the \$350bn to \$400bn range this year – is not sustainable indefinitely.

If the pandemic continues through 2021, the effect may be to soft-land the economy into a classic recession with thousands more bankruptcies on the horizon as entrepreneurs give up on business models that are not viable even with government support.

TELEWORKING - A NEW NORMAL

There are new trends establishing themselves as the pandemic continues which will survive its demise and the most well known of these is the massive growth in remote working. Initially, teleworking was a temporary response to the order by governments to shut down offices or limit occupancy. However, it is increasingly evident that teleworking will become a prevalent trend in the post-pandemic economy.

But will teleworking hollow out city centres? I don't think so because remote working will not be a binary choice but just one of a buffet of alternatives available to office workers going forward. Flexible working hours, mixes of remote and in-office options and suburban satellite offices will be offered among an array of alternatives to the traditional 9 to 5 commute. City centres may not become ghost towns but it seems likely that there will be a significant and permanent reduction in the number of people travelling there to work. Under current lockdown rules in Montreal, a maximum occupancy of 25% is permitted in office buildings but the average of actual occupancy is only in the 5-10% range. Much of this reticence is related to the fear of infection but for many, it reflects a choice to work from home.

The commute is the elephant in the room. Pre-COVID, hundreds of thousands of Montrealers rose at the crack of dawn or earlier, dressed in their finest and at their own cost and inconvenience spent one, two or three hours travelling from where they lived to where they worked and back. All that in the knowledge that what they were travelling to do could just as easily have been done without ever leaving where they were – and benefiting from an extra hour in bed! Ultimately, employers and staff will negotiate new working conditions between them and each will enjoy a financial payback: businesses will pay less in rent and workers will save on the time and cost of travel. On the opposite side of the ledger will be the public purse. A less populated downtown will mean higher public transportation deficits and a reduction in municipal tax takings.

Remote working has already adopted a new euphemism. Now called by some the "Distributed Office" it will become an important feature of the white-collar employment space in the coming years.

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COVID-19 and the growing need for dual-source supply chains cont. from page 5

Ulster University's Connected Health Innovation Centre is at the forefront of business-led connected health research, with a focus on the management of long-term chronic conditions. For example, they are doing significant work in the area of sensors, from those that monitor a patient's health status and identify early signs of illness to those that track electrical responses in the brains of patients with neurodegenerative diseases, providing real-time feedback during clinical studies.

Underpinning the industry is a commitment to cybersecurity, never more important given recent cyber threats targeting organizations developing COVID-19 vaccines. Northern Ireland is home to the UK's National Centre for Secure Information Technologies, located at Queen's University Belfast, and has one of the highest concentrations of cyber employment in Europe, beneficial for companies looking to safeguard intellectual property and clinical data.

This integration of academic research, clinical practice, and technological expertise allows scientific programs to link directly to clinical outcomes, helping companies in Northern Ireland accelerate development efforts and be more successful much sooner than competitors.

The Northern Ireland government proactively supports the life sciences sector. As the region's economic development agency, Invest Northern Ireland helps companies looking to establish operations in the region by brokering collaborations with local business, academia, and health organizations, providing funding, and advising on how best to scale. Essentially, Invest Northern Ireland is a catalyst helping companies identify the

locations, people, and resources that will ensure success.

We're currently excited about the recently launched "City Deals," which include \$1.54 billion worth of funding — an investment of \$1,000 per person — in economic growth projects. Many will significantly enhance Northern Ireland life and health science capabilities, including new institutes for clinical research, digital healthcare technology, and longitudinal healthcare data capture.

Given Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, there has been speculation about how the UK leaving the EU at the end of this year will impact Northern Ireland.

Although final agreements have yet to be inked, we anticipate that Northern Ireland may be the only jurisdiction with UK and EU regulatory overlap. This would provide the unique ability to trial, manufacture, and commercialize products and pharmaceuticals for both markets from one location. Nowhere else in the UK or EU will that 2-in-1 opportunity be possible.

This dual-market scenario would certainly enhance Northern Ireland's potential for second-source manufacturing, but no matter how the policy shakes out, the building blocks for strengthening your supply chain remain: talent, time zone, and the intersection of science, technology, and manufacturing.



What's in store for next year? cont. from page 10

Forecasting the future is a fool's errand but here goes with my best guess of what 2021 might look like:

- The effects of COVID will be felt beyond the end of 2021.
- There will be continued government assistance to affected businesses and individuals but at a lower rate than in 2020.
- There will be another large government deficit in 2021 but no new taxes on the middle class in the next budget.
- We will slide into a conventional recession in 2021 with announcements of more bankruptcies and job losses.
- Unemployment will stabilize but at a level considerably higher than in 2019.
- The hardest hit sectors will be travel, tourism, hospitality, festivals, conventions, the arts and sporting events. Many companies in these sectors will not survive through to the end of 2021.
- The trend towards teleworking and more flexible working conditions will accelerate during 2021.



Challenging and changing times for immigrants

In recent months, the rules around immigration have been modified significantly and frequently due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Montreal attorney Stephen Fogarty outlines a few highlights.

In an effort to reduce processing delays, on 24 September, the Honourable Marco E. L. Mendicino, federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, announced plans to augment the number of staff processing spousal **sponsorships** by 66%, as well as introducing innovations to digitalize paper applications, so that staff working remotely will have full access to files. The goal is to finalize 18,000 files from October through December of this year, to make up for the COVID-related slowdowns.

This announcement was followed on 5 October by news that the parents' and grandparents' sponsorship program, which had been suspended due to COVID, was resuming. Potential sponsors have a three-week period in which to file an expression of interest, following which 10,000 interested persons will be selected by lottery, with 60 days to file a complete application. The Ministry's computer system will be equipped to weed out duplicate applications, so that everyone will have an equal chance. The lottery period expired on 3 November. The government is targeting 30,000 parents' and grandparents' sponsorship spots available in lottery to take place during 2021.

Family visits to Canada

On 9 October, 2020, Canada modified the rules regarding family visits during the coronavirus pandemic, so that these would not face outright prohibition as with regular tourism. It will be easier for foreign nationals wishing to visit immediate and extended family members residing in Canada who are citizens or permanent residents, as well as foreign nationals visiting family members who have temporary status in Canada. Would-be visitors are to have a plan to visit for at least 15 days, including quarantining. Information for applications can be found on the IRCC webpage, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and visitors to Canada: Uniting with family members.

More changes for skilled workers seeking permanent residency

As readers of this column will recall, under an agreement between Ottawa and Quebec, the provincial government has jurisdiction to process foreign nationals for permanent residency in economic fields and, if approved, grant them a selection certificate or CSQ, subject to final vetting by the feds for health, criminality and national security.

One of the most popular programs in recent years has been the Quebec experience program or PEQ, which has a skilled worker stream and a Quebec graduate stream.

For skilled workers, changes will affect new applications

from 22 July, 2020 onward. (Persons who already had a valid work permit and resided in Quebec the day before will be "grandfathered" in and permitted to apply under the former rules.) Under the new rules, candidates will have to demonstrate the equivalent of two-years' full-time employment during the three-year period prior to the date of their application for a CSQ. The former rules required only one year of full-time experience during a period of 24 months. As well, qualifying employment will be restricted to persons holding O, A and B level jobs, as per the National Occupation Classification rules. C and D-level skills jobs will no longer be eligible.

In addition to the pre-existing rule requiring the main applicant to have an advanced-intermediate level of spoken and comprehension in French, as of 21 July, 2021, Quebec will require the married or common law spouses of skilled workers applying under the PEQ stream to demonstrate competency at level-4 spoken French. (This rule will not apply to accompanying spouses if the principal applicant was grandfathered into the pre-July 22, 2020 rules.) It will be interesting to see whether this additional French-language requirement will have the effect of encouraging more non-native French-speaking couples to seek permanent residency in provinces other than Quebec.

Processing standards for obtaining a CSQ under PEQ have been raised to six months from the former goal of 20 working days. It is to be kept in mind that after obtaining a CSQ, it takes about 15 months more for the federal immigration ministry to process the permanent residency application.

In early 2020, Quebec decided that it was not sufficient that candidates and their spouses acknowledge the existence of "democratic and Quebec values", but instead provide confirmation that they had taken approved measures to learn about these values. This prerequisite continues to apply to all applications, no matter if the candidate held a work permit before 22 July.

*Stephen Fogarty is a Montreal attorney practicing immigration, citizenship, and entertainment law at Fogarty Law Firm. He is a co-author of the book, *Droit de l'Immigration et de la citoyenneté*, published by LexisNexis Canada. Stephen may be contacted at 514-633-9289 or through his firm's website www.fogartylaw.ca/contact. This article is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The information contained in this article is considered up to the time of writing. As such, some government policies may have changed by the time you read this.*



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ICCC MONTREAL UPCOMING OBJECTIVES

- Revamp website and increase our social media activity
- Build stronger ties with the pan-Canadian chambers
- Meeting with the new Ambassador to discuss Brexit and topical issues - chance to welcome him to Montreal
- Event to open Enterprise Ireland's Montreal office – hopefully Q4 2020 or Q1 2021
- As COVID allows, we will engage and involve our members in activities – quizzes, Christmas party, AGM, lectures
- Grow our individual and corporate membership base

Communications Corner

We'd like to thank those who contributed time, content and insight to the Winter 2020 edition of ICCC News Montréal: Conor Barry, Deirdre Clune, Paul Dunne, Stephen Fogarty, Kevin Holland, Vivian Doyle-Kelly, Michelle Sullivan, Martina Branagan and James Fitzgerald.

Do you have news? All members and friends are invited to share updates and submit articles of interest to the business community here in Montréal: office@iccmntl.com

Useful Web Sites



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Global Affairs Canada

international.gc.ca

Mission of Canada to the EU

canadainternational.gc.ca/eu-ue

**Innovation, Science and Economic
Development Canada (ISED)**

ic.gc.ca

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service

tradecommissioner.gc.ca

Travel advisory

travel.gc.ca/destinations/ireland

Irene Woods: A step ahead on the road less travelled

How does one go about opening a private school in Quebec? In the latest instalment of our ‘TRAILBLAZERS’ series, Michelle Sullivan talks to Cork native Irene Woods who emigrated to Montreal by way of Nigeria more than 40 years ago and founded an English-language private school, Kells Academy. With campuses in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce for K-to-12 students and Westmount catering to high school students, Kells has always taken the road less travelled, offering each student a personalized experience from the moment they step through the door. This appetite for innovation makes Irene Woods a true trailblazer and inspirational entrepreneur within Montreal’s Irish community.

Tell us about your early years in Canada

Irene Woods (IW): I left Ireland for Montreal in 1970. I had worked as a biochemist at University College Dublin, and enrolled in a PhD program at McGill. I loved the intellectual stimulation but I am also very much a people person. I came to realize working alone for long hours in a lab was not for me, so I began looking for new opportunities.

After leaving McGill, I became what was then called a “free-flow” teacher with the Vaudreuil-Soulanges school board. I was given the mandate to teach students who were struggling in the classroom. I discovered I could become a much more effective teacher if I understood the specific challenges each individual student faced. Teaching these small tutorial groups became interesting and even joyful – especially as I could see the difference it was making in the scholastic life of my students. In retrospect, I would say that this experience was a turning point for me as I slowly came to realize what it takes to achieve academic success. This tutorial model laid the foundation of what would later become Kells Academy.

How did you come to found Kells Academy?

IW: Our beginnings were humble. I first set up the Westmount Learning Centre in 1974 as a tutorial service. Within a year, I had parents entreating me to start a school as they felt that their children enjoyed and learned more in the single hour under the tutorial model than over several hours in the traditional classroom. Over the next couple of years, the Westmount Learning Centre became Kells Academy, a full-time kindergarten-to-grade-12 school with a firm focus on an individualized approach to learning.

Kells has grown from an initial cohort of 10 students in 1974 to approximately 400 students now. This includes a very diverse group of students from across Greater Montreal as well as international students representing a wide range of languages and cultures from regions such as Asia, the Middle East and South America. We quickly found that the tutorial approach worked not only with students who struggled to learn, but

with all of our students. It was particularly suited to the diverse international student population who had to adapt not only to a new country and culture, but also to a new curriculum in what was not their first language.

Today at Kells, each student’s program is tailored to his or her specific needs. This has led to our setting up the Language Learning Center where students can spend some time learning English in an accelerated setting, rather than have to struggle both with the language and the curriculum in the classroom. Coping with academics then becomes much easier once these fundamentals are in place. Similarly, when students with learning challenges such as dyslexia or attention issues enroll at Kells, we make an effort to understand how they learn and adapt our teaching methods accordingly. Instead of fitting students to the traditional set mold, we adapt our pedagogical techniques to fit each student’s needs.

Our students benefit from Kells’ programs like Flex, where time is built into the schedule for the exploration of personal interests. Some of our students choose to take this time to explore fields like robotics, the arts or public speaking. It helps bring joy into the learning process, which is a key to creating life-long learners. We aim to make learning really exciting. Curriculum is important, and is a guide, but you have to really go above and beyond. You have to take students’ interests, strengths and challenges into account – always.

At Kells, we strongly believe that each student is capable of learning and that a standardized teaching model is not suitable for all. This personalized approach to learning has always been the *raison-d’être* for our existence and the secret to our success.

How did you find working within the Quebec context, as a new arrival and budding entrepreneur?

IW: I found Quebec to be very friendly to entrepreneurs. It’s an incredible place to do business. Over the years, I’ve started special education schools, regular schools and a language school. It has always struck me how cooperative and helpful Quebecers are. I felt so welcomed, even if I didn’t speak the language. On occasion, representatives from the Ministry would only speak French, which was a challenge for me as an Irish immigrant, but I couldn’t believe how good they were in providing me with every assistance. For example, we recently requested a Ministry permit to open an annex for our English Language learners. This was an innovative model for a high school and something and entirely new for them, but they were very open to the concept.

Setting up any new enterprise requires financial backing. I’ve also found banks very helpful. I started in the days when business wasn’t that friendly to women, yet the banks became my teachers. I’m a self-taught entrepreneur. I don’t come from a business background and have no experience with it. It was



Irene Woods: A step ahead on the road less travelled

through the banks that I learned how to read a balance sheet. With time, I became more business savvy as I came to learn and understand their requirements for getting a loan.

Quebec is a very friendly environment and gives entrepreneurs a wonderful opportunity to flourish. Networks are important. I've found that it's easy to make contacts and to get people to help you. People are very enthusiastic here. It is part of the "new world" and has a totally different mind-set and way of thinking as compared to Europe.



working as a teacher, including the teaching of French, whereas my son is a doctor and an ENT specialist who also teaches at l'Université de Montréal. He is married to a doctor of French-Quebec ancestry and they have two children. We are now truly Québécois and Canadian!

Irene Woods is a longstanding member of the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce - Montreal. She serves on the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Irish Studies Foundation and on the Advisory Board of McGill University's International Community Action Network.

For more information about Kells Academy go to: www.kells.ca.

What advice do you have for budding entrepreneurs?

IW: Believe in yourself. I do feel there is such a thing as a natural born entrepreneur, but I also think you can learn as you go along. I obviously found a niche in the community. If you offer something unique, and put in the hard work, your business idea can become a reality.

The biggest hurdle can often be a lack of start-up money. Starting small is OK. Once your clients realize you've got something worthwhile, your business will expand. Kells' precursor, the Westmount Learning Centre, started with only 10 students and grew from there.

Where does Nigeria fit into your career path?

IW: In my early 20s, I accepted a two-year contract to teach chemistry and math at a Nigerian school. When the school principal died unexpectedly, I took on his role as well. I was 22 years of age, with no teacher training. It was a formative experience, to say the least. The students were very keen, and eager to share their culture. I learned the importance and richness of cultural exchange from them.

Understanding culture is such an important part of a teacher's success. At Kells, we've done very well helping both our local and international students succeed here in Quebec. This includes the children of refugee families sponsored by Kells, many of whom have fled very difficult situations. It begins with our intake process. We know a lot about all our students before they even set foot in our classrooms. We map out a strategy that ensures they are in the right grouping and have access to our excellent resource team. The freedom of thought, speech and action that our Canadian culture permits can be challenging for students from a different background. Our teachers adapt their methods to help our international students bridge the inevitable knowledge and culture gaps.

I'm grateful for my time in Nigeria. My experiences there at a relatively young age, molded me into a more well-rounded educator. I am happy that I was able to incorporate those values of joy, inclusivity and mutual respect that I learned there to Kells. They remain the keystones of our school culture to this day.

How has your family integrated into Quebec life and culture?

IW: I have two grown children who were born, raised and educated in Montreal. My daughter is now in British Columbia

Kells is a client of Michelle Sullivan Communications.

COVID-19: HOW KELLS IS MEETING THE CHALLENGE

When schools across Quebec were plunged into distance learning overnight in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Kells Academy didn't miss a beat. Immersed in technology for more than a decade, Kells has emerged as a leader in the field of online teaching. Kells was able to adapt quickly to a new virtual environment, ensuring its students didn't miss a single day of class.

This smooth transition has, in great part, been due to the far-sightedness of Irene Woods who envisioned the importance of technology in learning over a decade ago. She recognized that cutting edge technology would free the teachers time to teach more creatively and allow them to put more emphasis on pedagogy. The staff readily accepted the new challenges. Ten years later, when the pandemic crisis struck, Kells staff was already comfortable working with technology and had no problem switching to online teaching within a very short time period. That same openness to technology is now serving Kells well as the school's teachers, students and administrators navigate the restrictions forced on by the pandemic. For example, Kells has adapted to meet the needs of students in the Middle East and Asia by implementing a flexible teaching schedule that takes a variety of time zones into account. Thanks to web conferencing solutions, guest lecturers from around the world are accessible to students and teachers who have found creative ways to ensure that their online classrooms remain dynamic.

The technology department at Kells works closely with the teachers, adapting to their changing needs. This collaboration has resulted in the best possible outcome for the students. The school's adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges and adversity has only highlighted its frontier spirit as Kells Academy continues to grow from strength to strength.



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