



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs

# Embassy of Ireland, Ottawa

## 2020 Annual Report - Mission Operations, Outreach and Significant Events

January 2021

We acknowledge that we operate on the traditional and unceded territory of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

## FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

This is the Embassy's report for 2020. It was an exceptional year for all of us, including this Mission, all our Missions around the world, our Diaspora and families, and for Iveagh House, our Headquarters.

It was heart breaking at the outset last March to see St Patrick's Day events cancelled here and around the world. We braced for the pandemic and assumed that we might restage them later in the year. As we have learned, Covid-19 implacably follows its own logic.

As we pivoted to deal with this and support our communities here in Canada, we had the strong support of the Government, the new Minister for the Diaspora, Colm Brophy T.D., and colleagues at home. I would like to note the support of Irish Abroad Unit. It managed an unprecedented global consular and repatriation operation and retooled financial support for Irish organisations helping their communities deal with the impact of the pandemic.

I think one lesson that the pandemic has taught us is the value of human contact and social engagement. The absence of high level and ordinary visits, direct engagement with contacts and community groups, travel and events underlined their essential value, particular in the context of the change at HoM level. Virtual events and contacts have value. They are easy to organise and with reach in space and time (for those recorded and available on the internet). However, virtual platforms can at best be additional over the longer term and are not substitutes for direct engagements and representation.

We remember all those who have lost their lives to the pandemic. We look forward to the vaccination programme and other measures to suppress and eventually eliminate the virus, thanks to an unprecedented programme of scientific research and public cooperation.

For Canadians in general and for the Irish community here, the pandemic has been a great challenge. The response of Irish organisations across this great and vast country has been as inspiring as it has been valuable in meeting the needs of our community. We simply could not do what we do without you.

We would like to pay particular tribute to our seven Honorary Consuls and to the local staff at the Embassy and Consulates for their commitment and professionalism throughout a most challenging year.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir!

Eamonn McKee, Ambassador; John Boylan, Deputy Head of Mission; Laura Finlay, Second Secretary; Ottawa

Frank Flood, Consul General and Jennifer Bourke, Vice-Consul General; Vancouver

**Ottawa**

**January 2021**



Ambassador Eamonn McKee.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Photo by Sam Garcia, *The Hill Times*. All other photos taken by Embassy staff unless otherwise indicated.

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## OVERVIEW

For the Embassy Ottawa, 2020 presented significant changes in official presence, personnel, and an unprecedented change in operations.

In terms of our official presence, a new chapter began with the opening of the Consulate General premises in Vancouver in October. I would like to commend Frank, Jennifer and the local staff team for the great job they have done, the impact they have made, and the wonderful new chancery they have opened.

Regarding personnel, the Embassy said goodbye to Ambassador Jim Kelly who concluded his four-year posting. The passing of former colleague Michael Hurley was received with great sadness at the Embassy. Michael is remembered as a hardworking, thoroughly decent, and kind colleague. Thanks to their time and efforts in Canada, Jim and Michael leave a legacy of a much-improved workplace, a fine operation, and enhanced reputation for the Embassy and Ireland.

The Ambassador's PA, Tressa McMaster, also brought her five-year tenure with us to a close and thirty-year veteran Siobhán Doran retired, both in December. Both will be missed as dedicated workers and fond colleagues whose experience will be missed. The Embassy welcomed Ambassador Eamonn McKee who arrived on 10 September and presented his credentials virtually to the Governor General, Julie Payette, on 16 October.

The Embassy Ottawa faced the upheaval common to most every mission with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Embassy immediately pivoted to a reduced-staff rotation system, which ensured staff safety and full provision of the mission's core services throughout the pandemic. The rotation system was communicated to staff on Friday March 13<sup>th</sup> and implemented the following week once lockdown was announced. The arrangement continued for the rest of the year. In terms of passports, the Embassy remains one of the busiest in the mission network: 1,648 issued in 2019 and 1,060 in 2020. The visa side was busy too, issuing 419 in 2019 but dropping to just 33 in 2020 because of the pandemic.

St Patrick's Day events were cancelled, including the National Day Reception, as was the increasingly popular 'Irish Night on the [Parliament] Hill'. A major change in operations was effected to ensure consular support for the Irish community and repatriation for those returning to Ireland. Additional funding of €107,260 from the Covid-19 Response Fund for Irish Communities Abroad proved vital in adjusting to new levels and types of demands on Irish community organisations.

With some €272,000 in ESP funding, relations with the Irish community remained strong. Outreach through contact and events was adapted through the use of virtual platforms. The Irish Lacrosse team won plaudits and commendations for ceding their place to the Iroquois team for the world championships next year.

Covid-19 restrictions effectively ended internal travel in what is an immense country and this has severely impacted on outreach to the Irish community, business, Centres of Irish studies, and key Canadian agencies and contacts.

After an unprecedented increase in high-level visits over the previous three years, all visits ceased for the duration of the year. As part of their pandemic response measures, the very popular two-year International Experience Canada programme was suspended by the Canadian authorities, as was the Working Holiday Authorisation programme on the Irish side. The Embassy was delighted that the Canadian authorities agreed that the quota at 10,700 would be retained when the WHA programme resumed.

The Government agreed in December to table the Bill to ratify CETA. James Maloney MP, chair of the Canada-Ireland Parliamentary Friendship Group tabled a motion on 16 December to recognise March as Irish Heritage Month and it received an enthusiastic first reading. The Ceann Comhairle, the Irish chair, nominated Deputy David Stanton as Convenor on 10 November.

The Embassy embarked on an internal process of reflection and forward thinking to develop a plan to implement the Ireland-Canada strategy on a project management basis, with the support of HQ, and submitted a business case to the Programme Oversight Board.

The search for a new chancery was pursued intensively by the DHOM resulting in a shortlist submitted to HQ.

## ACCOUNTS

### 2019

The initial Annual Budget for 2019 was €709,460, which was revised down to €693,323 in the mid-year budget review. Actual spend was €619,968.

There was an under-spend in several subheads, including:

- A2TRAVEL (with the exception of A2AIRECON, where we overspent by 7%).
- Rent for the diplomatic staff (A1RENTALL).
- Chancery Rent (A6CHANRENT).
- Staff salaries (A1CSALARY and A1DSALARY).
- Official mobiles (A4MOBILE).

There were overspends in areas such as:

- Newspapers (A3ELECSUB and A3PRINT).
- Embassy car costs (A3CARCOSTS).
- Postage (A4POSTAGE).
- Small electronics (A5LOWVALUE).
- Security for the Residence and Chancery (A6SECURITY).
- Maintenance costs for the Residence (A6MAINT).

### 2020

The initial Annual Budget for 2020 was €704,750, which was revised down to €601,773 in the mid-year budget review. Actual spend was €595,990.

There was an under-spend in several subheads including:

- A2TRAVEL (with the exception of A2TAXI).
- Stationery (A5STAT).
- Official mobiles (A4MOBILE).
- Diplomatic Bags (A4DIPBAG).

The underspending in these areas is a direct result of the pandemic, and spending under these subheads are expected to return to normal once the effects of the pandemic have died down. The main overspend in the Mission's budget was under the A6MAINT and A6MINOR subheads, which were both much higher than expected, due to repairs and improvements at the Official Residence. The Embassy was over-budget in A5LOWVALUE (small electronic items and accessories), due to the one-off spend on protection accessories for the new Embassy phones, and new online newspaper subscriptions.

## STAFF

There are three diplomatic officers (Counsellor up to August and A/Secretary as of September, First Secretary, and Third Secretary) and nine locally engaged members of staff in Embassy Ottawa, including a Driver/Residence Manager and a Housekeeper. The Embassy's Consular Officer and the Ambassador's EA both left the Embassy at the end of 2020. HR sanctioned a recruitment competition for both positions.

## OFFICE AND RESIDENCE ACCOMMODATION

The search for a new Chancery in Ottawa was continued with energy to year's end. Following intensive work in Ottawa and close liaison with HQ (Property Management Unit), three buildings were shortlisted by year's end for consideration. CG Vancouver opened to the public at their new premises on 01 September 2020 and the Consulate was officially opened on 30 Oct 2018. Repainting of parts of the Residence was carried out in two phases following sanction from PMU. Following a request from PMU, work began on a comprehensive report on work required at the Residence to retain its value as a national asset and ensure its functionality over the medium term.

## PROMOTION AND OUTREACH 2019/2020

The Q1PROMOTE budget for 2019 was €59,990, of which €48,096 was spent. The initial Q1PROMOTE budget for 2020 was €60,000, which was cut to €14,000 after the mid-year review. As a result, there was an unavoidable overspend of 15%. In 2020, 25% of P&O spending went to 'Our People,' compared to almost 70% in 2019. However, the Embassy spent much more on 'Our Prosperity,' under both 'Culture' and 'Other.' The Embassy lost some money from the P&O budget when SPD events were cancelled due to Covid-19, as some deposits were non-refundable.

HLG Project Code	2020 €	2020	2019 €	2019
Our People	3680	23%	32865	68%
Our Influence	2181	14%	7283	15%
Our Values	607	4%	193	1%
Our Prosperity - Culture	3122	19%	2236	5%
Our Prosperity - Other	2824	17%	3556	7%
Europe	1182	7%	1968	4%
COVID-19	2543	16%	0	0%

\*All amounts shown are in Euro.

## 2020 BREAKDOWN

- Almost a quarter of PnO spending was on **Our People**, which included a reception and various meetings with Irish community members.
- **Our Influence** included meetings and dinners with key contacts and diplomatic staff.
- **Our Values** included Remembrance Day and Air India memorial wreaths.
- **Our Prosperity Culture** included costs related to St. Brigid's Day at the Residence, the EU Film Festival, speaker's fees for online events, and books for the Embassy library.
- **Our Prosperity Other** included Christmas décor for the Residence and LCBO stock for the Residence.
- **Our Place in Europe** included the spending on EU Day of Languages and other EU Delegation projects.

- The **COVID-19** project code included all costs related to events which were cancelled because of the pandemic (primarily deposits for SPD).

## DEPARTMENTAL EVENTS REPORT (DERS)

### 2019

The Embassy entered 154 events on the DERS system. Of these events, the majority were Economic events, followed by Irish community and cultural events.

Category	No. of Events
Community	38
Political	11
Culture	24
Economy Trade	39
Economy Tourism	14
Commemorations	6
Government	8
EU	9
Governance	2
Media	3

The above figures can be broken down further into the HLGs:

High-Level Goals – High Level Outcomes	No. of Events
Our People – Support for Irish Diaspora	36
Our People – Promotion of Irish Culture	26
Our Prosperity – Strong Bilateral Relations	24
Our Prosperity – Promote Trade & Investment	50
Our Influence – Responsive to Global Challenges	4
Our Values	3
Our Place in Europe	11

### 2020

The Embassy entered 43 events on the DERS system. Of these events, the majority were Irish community events, followed by cultural and political events. Most of the events in the latter part of 2020 were online meetings, webinars, conferences, briefings, speeches, and presentations. At the height of the pandemic, many community and cultural events were held online as a way to engage with our diaspora.

Category	No. of Events
Community	16
Political	7
Culture	11
Economy Trade	5
Economy Tourism	2
Commemorations	1
SECCO	1

The above figures can be broken down further into the HLGs:

High-Level Goals – High Level Outcomes	No. of Events
Our People – Support for Irish Diaspora	17
Our People – Promotion of Irish Culture	9
Our Prosperity – Strong Bilateral Relations	8
Our Prosperity – Promote Trade & Investment	7
Our Influence – Responsive to Global Challenges	1
Our Values	1



Embassy Deputy Head of Mission John Boylan at the 2020 Douglas St. Patrick's Day Parade – The only parade that took place before lockdown.

## GLOBAL GREENINGS

In 2019, the following sites were greened for SPD:

- Niagara Falls (on both the Canadian and US sides)
- Casa Loma, Toronto
- City Hall, Toronto
- The Distillery District, Toronto
- The Cariboo Sentinel (newspaper) shop, Barkerville
- Calgary Tower, Calgary
- The Big Fiddle of the Ceilidh (Fidheal Mhor A' Ceilidh), Cape Breton Island
- Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat
- World's Largest Muskoka Chair, Gravenhurst
- Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa
- Cabot Tower on Signal Hill, St. John's
- The Wawa Goose
- Sail of Lights at Canada Place, Vancouver
- Mac the Moose, Moose Jaw
- The Bloedel Conservatory, Vancouver
- The Big Nickel, Sudbury
- The Toronto Sign, Toronto
- The CN Tower, Toronto



2020 Greening of Niagara Falls.<sup>2</sup>

## CONTACT AND EVENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CEMS)

The Embassy staff received basic CEMS training in Q3 of 2020. They began inputting the contacts on the system in August 2020, starting with business cards from Ambassador Kelly, the DHoM, and the Second Secretary, followed by the Green Pages of the Ireland Canada Chambers of Commerce. The lack of remote working devices for local staff was a major impediment. The number of contacts in the Embassy Ottawa CEMS is as follows:

<b>Primary Sector</b>	
Regional/Local Government	54
Need Sector	9
Cultural	47
Media	37
Irish Community	61
EU	15
International Institutions	9
Administration	48
Economic	455
Consular	7
Diplomatic Community	90
National Government	148
Civil Society	22
Political	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>1017</b>

<sup>2</sup> Photo courtesy of Tourism Ireland.

## IRISH ABROAD SERVICES

### PASSPORTS

Ottawa remains one of the busiest passport offices in the Mission network, although the numbers of passport applications coming into the Embassy has reduced as more services move online.

Year	New Applications	Re-Submissions (Re-registered & re-reviewed)	Total Applications Registered and Reviewed	Passports Issued
2019	1879	644	2523	1648
2020*	1132	535	1667	1060

\*Note: Services interrupted due to Covid-19 restrictions.

### VISAS

The visa office remains busy for a non-visa required country.

Year	Applications Registered	Applications Withdrawn, Returned Incomplete or Refused	Visas Issued
2019	688	269	419
2020	180	147	33*

\*Note: An additional 50 plus visas ready for issuance in mid-March, but were withdrawn due to Covid 19.

### WORKING HOLIDAY AUTHORISATIONS

There is a reciprocal quota of 10,700 IEC Working Holiday Visas each year between Ireland and Canada. While Ireland fills the quota each year, it is rare for the number of Canadian applicants to the programme to reach 500.

Year	WHAs Issued
2019	461
2020	80*

\*Note: the WHA programme was frozen in line with visa and immigration restrictions for Ireland in mid-March 2020. Many applicants withdrew their applications, but there are 42 WHA applications awaiting processing when the programme re-opens.

### CABHAIR CASES

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 was one of the busiest years for the Embassy in terms of requests for consular assistance. Thankfully, many of these cases could be resolved during the initial phone call, with only the more serious calls needing to be entered into the Cabhair system for follow up. In total, we had 43 difficult or complex cases in 2020.

2019	2020
30	43



Embassy Second Secretary Laura Finlay promoting Ireland at the International Experience Canada Fair.

## CONSULAR ASSISTANCE CONTACTS DURING COVID-19

Not all contacts regarding Covid-19 needed to be recorded in Cabhair, and so a record was kept of the number of Covid-19 calls and emails coming into the Embassy:

	28 <sup>th</sup> March- 3 <sup>rd</sup> April	4 <sup>th</sup> April - 10 <sup>th</sup> April	11 <sup>th</sup> April- 17 <sup>th</sup> April	18 <sup>th</sup> April- 24 <sup>th</sup> April	25 <sup>th</sup> April – 1 <sup>st</sup> May	2 <sup>nd</sup> May- 8 <sup>th</sup> May	9 <sup>th</sup> May- 15 <sup>th</sup> May
<b>Call</b>	45	47	28	35	42	45	31
<b>Email</b>	60	30	25	23	30	41	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>51</b>
<i>Short Term Visitor</i>	5	10	1	1	11	0	0
<i>Long Term Resident</i>	42	31	30	25	42	43	18
<i>Other</i>	26	7	3	5	4	2	6
<i>Advice: Returning Home</i>	44	16	3	2	6	2	5
<i>Advice: Flight Bookings</i>	7	12	5	7	4	8	3
<i>Financial Assistance</i>	14	5	6	1	3	1	0
<i>Visa Query</i>	4	9	6	10	20	26	3
<i>Passport/ETC</i>	21	20	12	17	15	15	19
<i>Medical</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Repatriation</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Other</i>	10	4	4	11	13	15	10

## EMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAMME FUNDING (ESP)

Irish community organisations reach from Newfoundland to Vancouver, both new and deeply rooted ones, reflecting Irish heritage here and a population that has some 13% claiming Irish ancestry (4.6 million). Toronto has a particularly dense and active formation of Irish and Irish community groups. Vancouver's Irish community has been boosted by new arrivals over recent years. All Irish organisations played a vital role in connecting members virtually, helping address the isolation and loneliness consequent to the imposition of pandemic restrictions on travel, combined with job losses (particularly those Irish working in the hospitality sector. A measure of the strains felt was reflected in the fact that community organisations in four areas (Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver, and Red Deer AB) requested funding for food voucher programmes. The extension of the Samaritans' service to Canada was widely welcomed.

In total, Irish community groups and organisations across Canada received C\$420,176 in ESP funding. Furthermore, Canadian groups were awarded a further \$165,640.30 in funding from the Covid-19 Response Fund for Irish Communities Abroad.

The Irish Canadian Immigration Centre (ICAN) continued to be a key ESP partner. Additional funding in 2020 helped to establish a new part time Social Care Advisor to operate in Vancouver to provide much needed on-the-ground support to the growing number of new arrivals in the city. This organisation would benefit in particular from multi-annual funding.

Key projects funding through ESP in 2019 and 2020 included the rent for the Irish Seniors Groups in Ottawa and Toronto; operating costs for the Ireland Canada Chambers of Commerce in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal; and Irish Film Festivals in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal.

The Photo Book of the Irish (through the Irish Gallery of Photography) is a project funded by ESP to cover Irish communities in Vancouver, Ottawa, Toronto, and St. John's (in collaboration with the Irish Women's Network, the Ireland Park Foundation, and ICAN).

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## TEAM IRELAND

Local Market Team meetings were held in July and December. The Embassy briefed on its developing ideas on the implementation of the Ireland Canada strategy. Within the traditional norms of inter-agency cooperation, relations are very positive and cooperative between the state agencies and the Embassy and Consulate. Under the direction of Deirdre Moran, the IDA is moving a second officer to Toronto, reflecting the finding that FDI potential is serious despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic. The EI office, led by Neil Cooney, in Toronto remained very active, despite the limitations. Steps were taken to extend the remit of the Agricultural Attaché in Washington to Canada.

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## HONORARY CONSULS

There are seven Canadian honorary consuls located in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, St. Johns, Calgary (x2), and Edmonton, along with one each in Nassau (The Bahamas) and Kingston (Jamaica). The Embassy and Consulate stays in touch on a regular basis. Following on from the successful Honorary Consul Conference in Dublin in 2019, plans were set in train to integrate them onto DFA's electronic system for emails and shared services as part of the rollout the Honorary Consul Digital Engagement Project.

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## IRISH STUDIES

The Ireland Canada University Foundation organises scholarly exchange and related events and supports academic and research networks linking both countries. It launched its new D'Arcy McGee Beacon Lectures with substantive (virtual) addresses by Dr. Mary McAleese (President of Ireland, 1997-2011) and the Honourable Jean Charest (Premier of Quebec, 2003-2012). The Lectures set the scene for the D'Arcy McGee fellowships which 'enables leading Irish and Canadian academics, researchers and thinkers to connect online, in a programme of activity designed to nurture and develop strong and fruitful collaborations which will enrich connections between our two countries.'

Irish studies, including Irish language learning, remain strong in Canada, notably the School of Irish Studies at Concordia University (Montreal) and the Celtic Studies programme at St Michael's School at the University of Toronto. Covid-19 restrictions have impacted severely on direct engagement by the Embassy with Irish studies faculties and students.



St. Brigid's Day 2020 – Panellists (left to right): Margaret Harvey O'Kelly, Tressa McMaster, Rosemary O'Flaherty, and Embassy Second Secretary Laura Finlay.

## INDIGENOUS CANADA

The Irish Lacrosse team won widespread praise for ceding its place to the Iroquois Nationals when their passports, not issued by a sovereign nation, had been deemed ineligible, even though the sport was invented by the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee). The Irish team had qualified for the International World Games (IWG) to be held in Alabama in 2022. The IWG changed course and said the Iroquois Nationals could participate if a slot opened. "You have gone above and beyond not only for us, but for what you believe is right," the Iroquois Nationals tweeted to Ireland Lacrosse. "Your actions have spoken louder than words showing everyone the true power of sport, and the spirit of lacrosse. We will never forget that."

## SOCIAL MEDIA

### TWITTER

The Embassy continues to build its Twitter following, and a concerted effort was made to post more regularly in 2020. The Twitter account was of particular importance at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the account was utilised to push out the latest travel advice and restrictions to our citizens across Canada. The table below clearly shows a large jump in follower numbers in March 2020, as people sought travel advice from the Mission.

2020*	Tweets	Impressions	Mentions	New Followers
January	2	11.6k	27	40
February	13	31.3k	50	30
March	43	104k	144	233
April	28	92.1k	98	77
May	18	58.9k	93	28
June	24	59.9k	99	35
July	5	22.1k	70	33
August	14	38.8k	76	42
September	39	54.7k	139	68
October	57	108k	196	89
November	15	34.8k	67	23
December	24	49.9k	111	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>666100</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>726</b>

\*Note: Due to a Twitter outage, accurate metrics are not available for 2019.

### INSTAGRAM

The Embassy launched its Instagram page in February 2020, with the aim of appealing to the younger members of the diaspora that do not use Twitter. There have been 117 posts (not including hundreds of stories that disappear after 24 hours) and the account has over a thousand followers. As well as important updates on the Embassy's work, cultural events, and travel advice, the account also posts lighter content, e.g. the Eurovision, the Toy Show, etc. in order to appeal to this younger following.



Previous Ambassador Jim Kelly at the 2019 Halloween Event.

## YOUTUBE

The Embassy created its YouTube channel in June 2020 in preparation for the inaugural Pan-Canada Bloomsday event. Since then, the channel has picked up 210 subscribers, and our videos have been viewed just under 3,000 times. The most popular video on the channel was Halloween event the Embassy co-hosted with CGNY, followed closely by the Famine history lecture with Professor Mark McGowan, and the inaugural Bloomsday event.

## VISITS AND SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

### INWARD MINISTERIAL VISITS

- 2-5 March 2019 – MoS Canney visited the PDAC (Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada) Conference, Toronto
- 7-10 March 2019 – SPD visit by Minister Richard Bruton to Toronto.
- 12-16 March 2019 – SPD visit by MoS Cannon to Calgary/Vancouver.
- 20-22 May 2019 – Minister Pat Breen visit to Toronto from as part of an EI Trade Mission.
- 1-4 March 2020 – MoS Canney to PDAC (note: sole ministerial visit of 2020), Toronto.

### AMBASSADOR/DHOM PROVINCIAL VISITS

- 16-17 Jan 2019 – DHOM joint visit with EI to Newfoundland.
- 01 March 2019 – Ambassador Jim Kelly opened the Toronto International Irish Film Festival.
- 09 March 2019 – Ambassador Jim Kelly greened Niagara Falls alongside Minister Burton.
- 09 April – Ambassador visit to Nova Scotia
- 29 April 2019 – Ambassador visit to Manitoba.
- 28 September 2019 – Ambassador on GAC Economic Mission to British Columbia, including meetings with BC's Lieutenant Governor, Premier, and Minister of Jobs, Trade and Technology.
- 30-31 October 2019 – Ambassador visit to New Brunswick.
- 05-06 Feb 2020 – Ambassador Jim Kelly attended TI sales mission in Edmonton and Calgary, and a reception with WestJet in Calgary.

### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- 06 May 2019 – third annual 'Irish Night on the Hill'.
- 25 August 2019 – Diplomats for Equality group march in Ottawa Pride (a joint effort with NL, UK, AUS, US, continued virtually in 2020).
- 26 September 2019 – Embassy booth at the EU Day of Languages in Ottawa (in collaboration with School of Celtic Studies at uOttawa and Conradh na Gaelige).
- 28 October 2019 – Inaugural Halloween event at the Residence (continued virtually in 2020).
- 03-04 February 2020 – Consul General Frank Flood attended 2020 media event and sales mission in Vancouver and Langley, BC.
- 12 February 2020 – Inaugural SBD event in the Residence (a panel discussion with Ottawa-resident Irish women).
- 16 June 2020 – Inaugural Embassy Bloomsday event (cross Canada virtual event, live streamed over Zoom/Youtube).
- 26 August 2020 – Fierté Ottawa Pride Event on Marriage Equality (virtual event co-hosted with the Australian High Commission, with Global Affairs Canada as our guests).
- 05 October 2020 – Inaugural "Féile na Gaeilge" event in Canada, co-hosted with CG Vancouver (virtual event).



Sue Fay Healy Irish Dancers perform at 'Irish Night on the Hill' 2019.

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- Changeover of Ambassadors, with Ambassador McKee arriving on 10 Sep 2020.
- Dec 2020 – Government approved laying the Bill to ratify CETA before the Oireachtas. Timing in 2021 TBD.
- 27 Nov 2020 – Applications were open for the ICUF (Ireland Canada University Foundation) D’Arcy McGee Beacon Fellowship to allow Canadian and Irish universities host fellows from each other’s countries. The fellowship was launched with two lectures, the first by former President Prof. Mary McAleese on 13 Nov 2020, and the second by former Premier of Quebec, Mr Jean Charest on 27 Nov 2020.
- Official LMT meetings with all resident State Agencies were held in Nov 2019, Jul 2020 and Dec 2020.
- 06 February 2019 – TI sales mission to Calgary, supporting TI's "Fill Your Heart with Ireland" initiative.
- Events on 09 April and 01 June 2019 to launch WestJet flights from Halifax and Calgary to Dublin respectively (in collaboration with TI).
- 11 September 2019 – Tourism Ireland lunch at the Residence. Attendees included Irish and Canadian contacts from travel agencies and tour operators.
- 26 February 2020 – AGM of Canada Ireland Inter-Parliamentary Group on Parliament Hill.
- 05 November 2019 – 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the School of Irish Studies at Concordia University.
- 16 November 2019 – The Ottawa Hospice holds an event every year entitled 'Homes for the Holidays' to raise funds for hospice care. The Residence hosts the shop for the event (note: not held in 2020). 1,400 people attended in 2019.
- 27 April 2019 – Ottawa/Montreal Rose of Tralee selection was held in the Residence.

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## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS CANADA

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Canadian federal election took place on 21 Oct 2019. The Trudeau-led Liberal Party were reduced to a minority government, losing the popular vote to the Conservatives (whose leader, Andrew Scheer, later resigned). The left-leaning NDP and separatist Bloc Quebecois hold the balance of power.

In January 2020, Deputy PM Freeland introduced the Bill to implement the CUSMA free trade deal (replacing NAFTA), which passed on 3 April. Also in January, the Iranian military shot down Flight 752 killing all 176 passengers, including 57 Canadians. PM Trudeau stated that Canada holds Iran responsible.

The first confirmed Covid-19 case in Canada was detected on 22 January. Canada’s Covid-19 response has been to spend heavily and ignore the deficit, with its fiscal position deteriorating the quickest among its G-20 peers because of its pandemic stimulus. However, its fiscal situation remains strong by international comparison with debt-to-GDP project to go from a mere 31% to 50%. PM Trudeau led a collaborative effort with Provincial Premiers to tackle the outbreak, assisted by the public health system. The public approves of the performance of both PM and Premiers. Canadian exports fell by 16% in 2020, not as badly as expected. The Trudeau government commits to creating one million jobs as part of the recovery.

In June, Canada lost its bid for WEOG seat on Security Council to Ireland and Norway.

In August, Erin O’Toole was elected leader of the federal Conservative Party and official opposition.

On 23 September, after proroguing parliament six weeks previous, the federal government issued a Covid-19 throne speech promising improved day care, pharmaceutical insurance, renewable energy and economic stimulus. The confidence motion passed with NDP support.

On 25 Nov 2020, Ireland officially endorsed the Canada-led Declaration Against the Use of Arbitrary Detention in State to State Relations. The launch of the Declaration has been postponed to 2021, with 50 countries endorsing as of Dec 2020.

On 11 Dec, the federal government unveiled an updated Climate Plan, which includes \$15bn worth of commitments across multiple policy fronts, including a plan to raise the carbon levy by 340% between 2022 and 2030. Also in December, a Bill was tabled in December to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A Canada-UK Trade Continuity Agreement (which replicates CETA) was agreed to maintain the status quo in the Canada-U.K. trade relationship.

## STRATEGY, BUSINESS PLANNING AND PMDS

Under Global Ireland, *Ireland's Strategy for the US and Canada 2019-2025* was launched by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs in Washington DC in March 2019. The Embassy Ottawa disaggregated its commitments as they applied to Canada and, following an internal process, developed a draft Plan to Implement the Canada Ireland Strategy (PICIS '25) on a project management basis. This was submitted to the DG IUKA and Programme Oversight Board. The process of developing PICIS '25 was very valuable in assessing and developing key pillars to guide the work of the Embassy in coming years. This greatly assisted the development of the Business Plan for 2021 and it will help shape the PMDS process, including role profiles, recruitment, and related issues such as training.

## ENDS



Top, left to right: The Rideau Canal Ottawa Locks looking out on the Ottawa River; Ambassador McKee and his spouse Mary arriving at the Residence; Autumn in Rockcliffe Park.



Bottom, left to right: Mary inspects the Residence's Christmas lights; Ambassador McKee at his virtual Presentation of Credentials.

