

## In Memory of Ted Howell



Ted Howell with Gerry Adams in Belfast

Sinn Féin strategist and Irish republican activist Ted Howell died on January 3, 2025. Ted was a towering figure in the history of Sinn Féin and the Irish peace process. What is lesser known, is the pivotal role Ted played in the development of the Irish solidarity movement in Canada.

Commencing in the mid-1980s, as director of Sinn Féin's Foreign Affairs Bureau, Ted sought to build political support in Canada for Irish self-determination. He relied on the support of old friends from Belfast who were living in Canada, including Liam McKee of Toronto, and the late Danny Burns of Vancouver. But it was not just old Belfast pals that Ted connected with to lay the foundation of the modern Irish solidarity movement in Canada. He developed a close and warm relationship with Kevin Callahan and the late Georges Beriault, who provided wise insight and advice from their Montreal homes. For my part, I first met Ted in 1986 and then worked with him in 1987 to organize visits to Toronto that year by Francie Molloy and Bairbre de Brun.

Over the next two years, Ted worked with activists from across Canada to achieve greater co-operation and co-ordination between individuals and local committees. This was no small feat, considering the size of Canada and the disparate political views and approaches of activists, who were not used to working closely together since the days of the Hunger Strikes. Ted's work bore fruit with the creation of the Irish Solidarity Network in the late 80s.

Organizing Canadian activists was, of course, only a small part of Ted's work at the time. While helping move us forward in Canada, Ted was playing a key behind the scenes role in the nascent development of

the Irish peace process. That work included outreach to John Hume of the SDLP, and then the Irish, American and British governments. Ted headed the Sinn Féin negotiations team through the peace process.

Ted always thought Canada had an important role to play in winning peace and Irish unity. With the IRA ceasefire of August 1994, he encouraged activists in Montreal and Toronto to seek a special visa for party leader Gerry Adams to visit Canada. Working with the party in Ireland, we won the visa and then organized a triumphant week-long visit to Canada for Gerry in October 1994, where he spoke in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

In the years that followed, Ted met frequently with Canadian delegations of political and trade union leaders visiting Belfast in support of the peace process. Then in 2001, Ted's Canadian connections were put to good use with the formation of Friends of Sinn Féin Canada. Liam McKee, his old pal from Belfast, was one of FOSF's founding Board members, along with Ted's schoolboy friend Patrick Totton of Toronto. His good friends George Beriault and Kevin Callahan from Montreal, were centrally involved with FOSF from the beginning and I was selected as its President.

While FOSF's first point of contact with the party was North America Representative Rita O'Hare, Ted was always available to provide political (and practical) advice on our work. I met him regularly at Sinn Féin Ard Fheiseanna over the next two decades.

I always found Ted to be well informed, thoughtful, respectful and kind. He was also patient, knowing what to say and when to say it. He was positively unflappable, providing a steady presence at difficult times. Since his passing, Ted has been described as a top "strategist" – and that he was. He thought things through, he worked with people and groups to get the most out of them, he played the long game, and he delivered. When the history of the Irish peace process is written, Ted's name will be front and centre.

Rest in peace Ted from your Canadian comrades.

Ní bheidh a leithéid arís ann.

Alan McConnell  
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Friends of Sinn Féin (Canada) Inc.