

## **A time when Hope and Opportunity rhyme**

### **A letter from Canada**



**a Chara,**

**The drive for Irish unity knows no boundaries or borders. This week, I travelled to Canada with Rose Conway Walsh for Irish unity commission events in Toronto and Ottawa.**

**These were part of a series of events across Ireland and the globe. They are an opportunity for the Irish abroad and others to discuss the opportunity to unite Ireland, the potential to define a new state, and to strategize on the way forward.**

**I had attended similar events in Ireland, in the US, and now in Canada. I always come away challenged, informed, and inspired. In these recent Commissions in Canada, a diverse range of speakers, drawn from cultural, sporting, business, labor unions, and political life, shared their hopes for the future of a new and united Ireland. Their ideas were added to by contributions from attendees..**

**In Toronto, one of the panellists reminded us that we were an old nation but a young people. We are an old nation that has been held together by our culture**

and shared experiences. Our culture, music, dance, language, and sports are the glue that binds us together regardless of time, oceans or borders.

We are also a young people with some of the highest levels of well-educated young people in Europe. We also have some of the highest rates of emigration. Canada, alongside Australia, is now the go-to destination for young Irish people leaving in search of a better standard of life than in Ireland, with its high rents, high costs, and failing public services.

One speaker gave the example of being in the final year in school, and the conversation about the future was a choice of where they would emigrate. At the time, they saw no future for themselves in Ireland, but in the Commission spoke passionately about building a better Ireland and a home to return to.

We are an old nation, and generations have made a home across Canada and the US. We are also an island of young people. We now have the potential to build a new state that will be a prosperous home for all our young people. A state in which our culture is shared and shaped by all.

At the meetings was a hope for the future and the recognition of the potential of Irish Unity. There was a recognition that an opportunity not realised is an opportunity squandered. The next stage of the discussion must be how we all work together to bring about a new and united Ireland. To overcome the obstacles of the resistance of the British Government and the refusal of the Irish Government to plan, prepare, or advocate for Unity.

The peace process and the Good Friday Agreement have been described in the phase from Seamus Heaney as a place where history and hope rhyme. We are now living in a time of hope and opportunity.

I would like to thank Alan and Gabriel, and the boards of Friends of Sinn Féin Canada, for making the events happen and for all of the panellists and contributions from the floor, which made the events so interesting and inspiring.

Have a great week.

Is mise,

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America