

**SPEAKING NOTES  
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA  
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON  
HOSTED BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN RAYMOND BASSETT  
AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND**

**RESIDENCE OF THE AMBASSADOR  
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Ambassador Bassett,  
Your Excellencies,  
Honourable Parliamentarians,  
Dr. Kelly,  
Distinguished Guests,

It is a pleasure to join you this afternoon and I would like to begin by thanking our congenial host, Ambassador Bassett, for inviting us to join him at this luncheon. Ambassador Bassett, you have had a lengthy career in the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, culminating in your current position as Ambassador to Canada, Bahamas and Jamaica. You studied at Trinity College and earned a doctorate in medical research and I was interested to learn that one of your sons graduated from University College Dublin, my own alma mater.

One of the members of the distinguished company gathered here today is Dr. John Kelly of the Ireland Canada University Foundation. I had the pleasure of enjoying Dr. Kelly's hospitality when I led a delegation from the Senate of Canada to Ireland in August 2011.

Dr. Kelly invited me to present the Foundation's scholarships to that year's recipients, students from Canada and Ireland. It was an invitation I was delighted to accept, having long been a proponent of increasing international exchange opportunities for Canadian students and making it easier for international students to study in Canada.

Together with many other Canadians, I lay claim to Ireland as my ancestral homeland. It was a wonderful experience to renew those connections by travelling to Ireland to begin my post-secondary education. I enrolled in the University College of Dublin for my undergraduate education before continuing on to Rome for graduate studies.

It is important to note that the benefits of international education accrue not just to Canadians and not just to students. Canada receives more than \$6.5 billion each year from international students through fees, accommodation and discretionary spending, creating over 83,000 jobs and generating more than \$291 million in government revenue.

Another positive effect is that students who come to Canada become unofficial ambassadors for Canadian ideals and values when they return to their homes. They also take back the knowledge that they acquired in Canada and participate in the economic and academic growth of their own countries. Strong personal relationships are also formed between Canadians and citizens of other countries, which endure and promote greater harmony and understanding among nations. The enriched learning environment promotes amity and friendship between individuals and among cultures.

Increasing international education in Canada can also serve to attract new permanent residents. As a general proposition, Canada hopes to attract individuals

who are educated and skilled. Those who have already spent some time in this country acquiring their education and training, while incidentally surviving a few winters, make excellent candidates.

Canada has recognized the advantages of international education and has been increasing the number of international students. The Government created the Imagine Education au/in Canada portal which provides an entry into study in Canada. Included in the information provided is a list, by country, of awards available to incoming international students, researchers, and faculty. There are 15 funding sources listed for those coming from Ireland. Many of these, including the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship and the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships, are of recent origin.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada changed its regulations for the international student visa program to allow students to work off campus on their student visa without requiring a separate work permit. The Canada Experience Class allows international students who have studied in Canada and graduated from a post-secondary institution to seamlessly apply for a post-graduation work permit. This enables them to obtain the full-time work experience needed to apply for citizenship.

Finally, the Government of Canada has dedicated \$10 million over the next two years to attract new international students. This funding will strengthen the “Imagine Education au/in Canada” program which aims to promote the high quality of a Canadian education to international students.

I have observed from afar the resolve of the Irish people in responding to the significant economic challenges they have faced of late. While I am well aware that this process is on-going and may continue for some time, they deserve the

utmost credit and respect for the manner of their response. Yet, neither does it surprise me. I was privileged to benefit directly from the Irish education system through University College Dublin. I witnessed up close a standard of education that continues to be admired across Europe and the world and is rooted in Ireland's reputation as a land of 'saints and scholars.' It is such academic excellence that will drive the Irish economy and ensure its growth, even in times of adversity.

It was St. Brendan the Navigator who, it is suggested, was the first European to discover North America. If it was St. Brendan, he pioneered a voyage that countless generations of Irish people have undertaken across the Atlantic Ocean to populate countries such as Canada. For this reason, there is an inherent interest in Canada in all things Irish, as evidenced by our enthusiastic celebration of St. Patrick's Day; a tradition that has its foundations in the estimated 4.3 million Canadian citizens who can claim some degree of Irish ancestry. While many of the early Irish immigrants settled in Newfoundland, their presence has spread throughout our vast country, including my home province of New Brunswick.

The generations of Irish who arrived in Canada have left an indelible mark on our society and culture, and have contributed greatly to our history through figures such as Louise McKinney, the first woman elected to a legislature in the British Empire; Morley Callaghan, a celebrated writer; Thomas D'Arcy McGee, a Father of Confederation; as well as Brian Mulroney, a former Prime Minister of Canada. From the Canada-Ireland Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group through to our distinguished traditions of peacekeeping, Canada anticipates ever greater collaboration with our Irish counterparts; continuing our close, natural relationship of mutual respect and cooperation.

The Ireland Canada University Foundation, in recognition of this, has taken advantage of the historically close ties between our two countries. While there is much that we share in common, there is equally enough diversity in our respective societies that translates into a rich learning experience for both sets of students. I was honoured to help recognize the academic excellence of those receiving the Dobbin Scholarship in 2011. For those young scholars, it was the beginning of a rewarding experience that enriched their academic and life experience, and will further enrich the relationship between Ireland and Canada.

There is still much that can be done. Universities, the private sector, and foundations like the Ireland Canada University Foundation all have a role to play in creating opportunities for our students to spend time studying abroad and to bring students to Canada. I am honoured we have Dr. Kelly with us in Canada as he advocates on behalf of the Ireland-Canada University Foundation.

I will conclude on a positive note by stating that progress has been and is being made. We can all look forward to toasting further successes when next we meet.

Thank you.