



ICAN Employment Services – Employment Preparation
Eamonn O' Loughlin Irish Canadian Immigration Centre
Developed by : Gerry O' Connor

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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. COMMON STAGES OF ADAPTING TO CULTURE SHOCK.....	2
Stage 1: Happiness and Fascination.	2
Stage 2: Disappointment, Confusing Feelings, Frustration and Irritation.	2
Stage 3: Gradual Adjustment or Recovery.....	3
Stage 4: Acceptance and Adjustment.	3
3. PREPARING YOUR JOB SEARCH CAMPAIGN	4
4. UPDATE YOUR INTERVIEW PROCESS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	5
5. CONDUCTING YOUR JOB SEARCH.....	6
6. KEY EMPLOYER SELECTION CRITERIA	7
7. KEY EMPLOYER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	8
QUESTION #1: “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR VISA”	8
QUESTION #2: “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CANADIAN WORK EXPERIENCE”	8
QUESTION #3: “WHAT ARE YOUR SALARY/WAGE EXPECTATIONS”	9
8. INTERVIEW SKILLS AND APPROACHES	11
9. YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION – WHAT YOU BRING TO THE EMPLOYER.....	11
10. UNDERSTANDING RECRUITERS - INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES AND STANDARDS USED BY RECRUITERS	12
11. BIOGRAPHY	16

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1. INTRODUCTION

This material is designed as supplementary reading material to assist New Arrivals to Canada from Ireland.

2. COMMON STAGES OF ADAPTING TO CULTURE SHOCK

Though each person is different and will have a unique experience settling into their new home, many people will go through four common stages of adapting to life in a new culture, often referred to as “culture shock.”

Take a look at the following four stages and determine which stage best represents your current position. Understanding where you are on this spectrum is important in terms of managing your employment search.

If you find that you are in stage 2, recognize that these symptoms are normal for any person settling into a new country. Your challenge is to decide the best way for you to manage these symptoms.

Stage 1: Happiness and Fascination.

Just before or shortly after arriving in Canada you may:

- Have high hopes and expect great things
- Feel this is a very exciting time
- Feel everything is new and interesting
- Feel confident and that you can easily cope with problems and stress
- Tend to focus on what is similar between Canada and the culture and country you come from

Stage 2: Disappointment, Confusing Feelings, Frustration and Irritation.

During the first six months you may:

- Feel happy about the challenges you have overcome
- Feel frustrated, confused and disappointed
- Feel very positive one day and very negative the next
- Focus on the differences between yourself and Canadians
- Miss your family and feel no connection to Canada
- Have difficulty going to work or looking for work
- Feel loneliness for your country and loved ones
- Feel guilty about leaving family members behind

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Stage 3: Gradual Adjustment or Recovery.

During this stage of adjustment, you may:

- Feel more in control of your life as you gain a better understanding of Canada
- Feel more confident in your language skills
- Gradually get involved in the community
- Have a better understanding of how to adapt to life in Canada
- Have a better sense of what you need to do to get what you want in Canada

Stage 4: Acceptance and Adjustment.

During this stage of you will likely:

- Feel more comfortable in Canada
- Have made some friends and be more involved in your new community
- Understand better how things are done in Canada
- Be studying, planning to return to school or working at better jobs
- Generally, feel content about having come to Canada

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3. PREPARING YOUR JOB SEARCH CAMPAIGN

- Be flexible with your initial salary or wage expectations.
- Focus on securing a position in your primary functional area at the best salary/wage you can negotiate. After several months, with this relevant Canadian functional experience on your resume, you can re-evaluate your compensation based upon prevailing market conditions for people with your knowledge, experience, skill and accomplishments.
- As a matter of recruitment policy, instead of offering a full-time position with full benefit costs, some employers may prefer to offer an employment contract for a fixed term to provide both the employer and the new recruit with an opportunity to evaluate the results achieved and the overall employment relationship. If the role falls within your area of expertise, accept the contract. You can re-evaluate your position towards the end of the contract to either remain with that employer or seek employment elsewhere. The experience you have gained will be invaluable.
- Update your resume. Refer to the Resume Template attached as a separate file. Update the ‘Career Objective’ section. Canadian resumes should define your employment areas of interest. Include 5-8 primary functional areas of interest in which you would like to work, listed in priority order. Make sure that this listing is as broad as possible to capture employer interest. Item #7 on your list may be the areas that most interests the employer – this may be the area that most interests the employer and leads to a job offer.
- The list of areas of interest is not restricted to your past experience. Look ahead and include functional areas that really interest you, even though you may not have direct experience in those areas. Include future areas of interest. Canadian employers often offer employment growth opportunities based upon your desired future career direction and motivation.
- Many search firms will code you in their employment database based upon the functional areas identified in your resume “Career Objective” section. If you omit a key area, you may miss being selected.
- If your qualifications are subject to regulation by a professional body, you should contact the regulatory body to secure accreditation (e.g. Provincial Engineering Association). Professional bodies may charge you an accreditation fee and identify additional professional courses that you must take in Canada in order to secure full accreditation.
- If applicable, update your LinkedIn and Facebook profiles. LinkedIn is a very important employment search tool. Employers may visit your Facebook page to evaluate your social profile.

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4. UPDATE YOUR INTERVIEW PROCESS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- It may be some time since your last interview. In re-entering the workforce, you must realize that your employment campaign is back at square one. You cannot take the interview process for granted. You must take the time to restart the clock and prepare all over again.
- During the interview, it is important that you ask the interviewer two key areas:
 - ❖ What are the duties and responsibilities of this position?
 - ❖ What is the profile of the ideal candidate?
- Once you know the answers to these questions, you must deliver a positive and somewhat aggressive “Selling and Marketing” approach that directly correlates your knowledge, experience and skills with the employer needs/requirements.
 - ❖ Provide specific examples of your prior employment experience. Highlight your accomplishments. Describe challenges you faced/ the solution process you used/ excellent results achieved. Case studies are an excellent technique to convey your knowledge and skills.
 - ❖ New Arrivals tend to be very shy about telling the employer how good they are – culturally it is not something that you do in Ireland in an interview situation. **In Canada, it is expected that you will sell and market your knowledge, experience and skills in a very positive way, without being overly aggressive.**
 - ❖ Don’t be shy or too timid. Note that the obligation is on you to provide the employer with good reasons why the employer should hire you.
 - ❖ Highlight areas where you believe that you can make a significant contribution to the organization
 - ❖ Never say “I am interested in this position because it will provide me with good experience”. The employer is not interested in helping you gain experience – the employer wants to hire somebody who can contribute to the success of the organization.

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5. CONDUCTING YOUR JOB SEARCH

- **Networking: The #1-way method to find a position in Canada.**

“Networking” means finding people within your target functional area and contacting them to:

- Ask their advice on potential job leads
 - Ask for contact information for other people in your field that you contact
 - **For every contact, “face-to-face” contact is much more effective than email contact. That being said, email each contact and try to arrange a personal meeting.**
 - **Once network contacts meet you, they have a much better understanding as to who you are and the type of organization and people that you will best match.**
- Understand how Search Firms/Recruitment Agencies operate:
 - Fee Structure
 - Structured Search vs. Contingency Search
 - Google “Employment Agencies”; “Employment Search” “Employment Services” in your local area to find local search firms. If you have a technical background, focus on firms that specialize in technical functions.
 - In addition to filing your resume with the firm, it is always more effective to meet the local consultant face-to-face. Consultant will be able to determine which employers are the best fit for your skills and personality.
 - Research companies and seek employment opportunities and industry connections on LinkedIn
 - Register with Industry Associations e.g. Engineer Association, CPA, HRPAO, etc.
 - Join the local Chamber of Commerce. Local chambers may offer a low membership rate for new arrivals.
 - Post your resume on major worksites e.g. Workopolis or Indeed
 - Access websites of major Canadian organizations e.g. banks. If they hire you directly, they avoid search-firm fees.
 - If applicable, check Federal and Provincial Government websites
 - Newspaper Employment Advertisements
 - Get the word out to everybody that you are looking for a job
 - Develop a systematic weekly plan to “get out and network”
 - Avoid making long-term financial commitments (e.g. lease/furniture purchase) until your job situation is finalized – you may want to relocate near your new work location OR your visa may expire
 - Stay close to public transportation

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6. KEY EMPLOYER SELECTION CRITERIA

The following is a listing of selection criteria that influence an employer's decision to either hire you, or not hire you:

- Candidate qualifications and experience against specific job requirements
- Candidate soft skills
 - How well will this person fit into my group?
 - Position fit
 - Teamwork skills
 - Leadership skills
 - Communication skills (Note 1)
 - Dress-code
- **Note 1:** The two most common problems that Canadian employers have with New Arrivals from Ireland in the area of communications are:
 - Candidate speaks too fast
 - Candidate speaks in such a low soft voice that interviewer cannot hear responses
 - If these apply to you, it is important that you slow-down your responses and elevate your voice
- **Note 2:** In an office work environment, business casual dress is the norm. Dress code is very important when meeting with clients and customers. During interviews, always dress to make a good impression. Check local work environments to monitor local dress-code practices. If referred by a search firm, you can always ask the consultant for guidance on the client dress-code.

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7. KEY EMPLOYER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUESTION #1: “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR VISA”

Incorrect Answer

- “I am here on a two-year IEC Working Holiday Visa which expires on [date]”.

Correct Answer

- “I hold a valid Government of Canada work visa. I will be applying for Permanent Residency status at the earliest opportunity. My ultimate plan is to remain in Canada and become a Canadian citizen”

Comments

- Some Canadian employers are not familiar with the IEC visa program and will not know what you are talking about.
- Many employers are prepared to invest six-months training time in a new recruit. Their reaction to your reference to a “Working Holiday” will be “Enjoy your holiday – however, we are not interested in investing our time and effort into somebody who may not stay with us”
- Some employers/recruiters landed in Canada from a foreign country and went through the process to become Canadian citizens – they relate well to newly-arrived Canadians who seek to build a new life in Canada and will make a special effort to help you start your new life in Canada.

QUESTION #2: “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CANADIAN WORK EXPERIENCE”

- If your work experience in Canada or abroad is directly relevant to the duties and responsibilities, **start selling and marketing your directly relevant past challenges and accomplishments, illustrated by specific examples**. Promote your customer service experience which is very important in Canada. Use a prior case study to illustrate your knowledge and achievements.
- If your work experience in Canada is light or not relevant to the duties and responsibilities, start by describing your relevant work experience in Ireland or abroad. Highlight your past challenges and accomplishments, illustrated by specific examples.
- If you are a recent graduate with little relevant experience, highlight your academic qualifications and the relevant areas of study. Highlight work-term experience.
- Highlight areas where your past experience is directly relevant or similar to the employer’s duties and responsibilities. The obligation is on you to persuade the employer that you can make a strong contribution.
- Highlight your willingness to learn and take courses to improve your knowledge of Canadian work practices e.g. legislation, securities law, trades knowledge etc.

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QUESTION #3: “WHAT ARE YOUR SALARY/WAGE EXPECTATIONS”

- As a general guideline, a New Arrival is not in a strong negotiating position when it comes to salary negotiation. Your prior experience and reputation prior to coming to Canada is unknown. There are few sources where an employer can determine your track record and capabilities. In certain fields, your prior experience outside Canada may not be recognized.
- Make contact with other New Arrivals in your community. They can be an excellent source of intelligence in terms of competitive salaries and wages.
- Keep in mind that, in major urban cities e.g. Toronto, Vancouver, it is very difficult for one person to live on the Minimum Wage. Housing and food costs are high.
- Keep in mind that there are three statutory payroll deductions in Canada:
 - Income Tax
 - CPP (Canada Pension Plan)
 - EI (Employment Insurance)
 - Added together, these deductions will reduce your take-home pay by approximately 20-30% depending upon your salary/wage level.

Incorrect Answer:

- Do not provide an absolute number e.g. “My salary/wage expectation is \$50,000”.
- If your number is higher than the employer’s target, you risk losing the position.
- If your number is too low, the employer may conclude that there is more money in the budget and therefore hire a more experienced candidate.
- Quoting your Irish salary/wage, converted to Canadian dollars, is irrelevant to a Canadian employer. The Canadian salary, taxation and purchasing-power structures are different in Canada.

Preferred Answer

- “I have moved to Canada to build my long-term career. I am looking for a salary/wage that is competitive in [City/Region].
- Try to leave it such that the employer proposes a number to you.
- If the employer aggressively seeks a number, quote a range e.g. \$45 – \$60k. The lowest number should reflect your absolute minimum. When applying online, you must indicate your salary expectations. Use a range rather than a fixed number.
- If the initial offer is lower than your expectations, ask for a salary/wage review after six months.
- In certain professions e.g. Engineering, salaries are determined with reference to the Regulatory Body Salary Scale.

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QUESTION #4: “HOW DO YOU LIKE LIVING IN CANADA?”

- Employer may be probing two areas:
 - ❖ How long is this person going to stay in Canada?
 - ❖ Does the candidate respond positively? Is this a positive person?
- Your answer must clearly convey that it is your intention to remain in Canada and build your career here.
- Provide strong reasons why you like living and working in Canada:
 - ❖ Excellent long-term career opportunities
 - ❖ Quality of Living
 - ❖ Canadians are very friendly
 - ❖ Great multi-cultural society with all the benefits of multi-culturalism
 - ❖ High standard of living
 - ❖ Canada’s profile on the world stage
 - ❖ Clean and effective transportation systems at relatively low cost
 - ❖ Highlight your interest in local sporting events and name local teams. Highlight your knowledge of team achievements:
 - Hockey (Toronto Maple Leafs; Vancouver Canucks; Edmonton Oilers; Calgary Flames; Montreal Canadiens;
 - Baseball (Toronto Blue Jays)
 - Basketball (Toronto 2019 NBA Champions)
 - Canadian Football League (“CFL”)

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8. INTERVIEW SKILLS AND APPROACHES

- **The “three-minute” rule.** Some recruiters will have decided, within the first three minutes, if they are interested, or not interested, in a candidate. How you relate to the recruiter during the first three minutes is critical.

- **Selling and Delivering your key messages:**
 - ❖ Emphasize that you are seeking a LONG-TERM CAREER OPPORTUNITY WITH A HIGH-QUALITY EMPLOYER
 - ❖ “I can do this job on the basis of.....(match everything you can offer with each specific requirement identified by the employer)”
 - ❖ “I would very much like to work for your Company.....” Provide reasons.
 - ❖ “If I am given an opportunity, I am sure I will prove myself.....”
 - ❖ Highly motivated to work hard
 - ❖ Re your salary requirements for your first entry-level job, be careful about quoting your salary requirement – you may produce a number that is too high or too low and therefore disqualify yourself. Allow the employer to make the initial offer – you can then judge if it is acceptable to you, given your financial circumstances. Leave it to the employer to quote a salary that is competitive in the marketplace. Ask for a salary review in 3-6 months as a condition of employment.
 - ❖ “I am willing to enter a management training program.....”
 - ❖ Ask what training/development opportunities are available. What is the employer policy to fund employee education?

9. YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION – WHAT YOU BRING TO THE EMPLOYER

- The “Irish Education brand” is highly regarded in Canada - excellent universities, institutes of technology, trade schools
- Excellent English-language proficiency – reading-writing-communication skills. New arrivals from Ireland offer a strong competitive advantage over new arrivals from other countries with limited English proficiency.
- Historically strong Irish Heritage in Canada. Irish emigrants have made a major contribution to Canada in many fields, including business, arts, medicine, academia, science, politics etc.
- New Arrivals from Ireland bring excellent team-building and social skills in the work environment. Relate well with people of different cultures and nationalities.

10. UNDERSTANDING RECRUITERS - INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES AND STANDARDS USED BY RECRUITERS

WHAT RECRUITERS SHOULD NOT DO

The following represent a number of basic interviewing errors to be avoided by recruiters:

Interviewer talks too much. You should be listening for approximately 75% of the interview. Talking for 25% of the time will allow you to provide information and lead the discussion, not dominate it.

Interviewer talks too little. Candidates should leave the interview with a basic understanding of the company and the position. Even in the first interview, part of your role is to sell the candidate on ABC Company and the position available. Allow the candidate to ask questions at the end of the interview.

Interviewer jumps to conclusions. Try not to let one piece of information dominate your thinking, whether positively or negatively.

Interviewer is influenced by personal biases. In this case, the interviewer allows personal biases to influence his/her perception of what is needed for the job. A potential data entry clerk may come across as too quiet and a potential sales representative as too assertive for your personal liking, but these attributes may fit the job requirements.

Interviewer suggests the “right” answers. This can happen when you ask leading questions of the candidate. Try not to let the candidate know what you want to hear i.e. “This job requires someone with good people skills. So, do you like working with the public?”

WHAT RECRUITERS SHOULD NOT ASK

Human Rights legislation prohibits discrimination in hiring on the following grounds: age, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, creed, sex, handicap, marital/family status, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and record of offenses. Any interview question that will elicit an answer revealing any information about these matters is illegal.

What if you feel you need certain prohibited information in order to determine whether the candidate can do the job? The question to ask yourself is: “Is this information relevant to the candidate’s ability to perform the essential duties of the job?” Your answer must be based on the job-related candidate specifications that you have developed. Your past experience and/or personal beliefs are not valid. Example: “Women cannot do that job – the last one was a disaster” or “Those employees will not want to be managed by someone of that nationality”.

There are some exceptions to this legislation i.e. *bona fide* occupational requirements (“BFOC”). These are essential components of the job. Additional information is required in order to correctly assess if a candidate can do the job. Such requirements must be genuine and reasonable.

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Example: For a driver or sales representative, a valid driver’s licence and good driving record are a BFOQ. Therefore, you are permitted to question the candidate about his/her record of offenses related to his/her driver’s licence. Another example is warehouse staff where the ability to lift items of a certain weight may be a BFOQ. You are permitted to question the candidate about any handicap that would prevent him/her from lifting such weights. You are also permitted to test this lifting ability in an employment medical.

Cases that are less clear are those where a prohibited ground may prevent a candidate from fulfilling a BFOQ. For example, in a position that requires 60% travel, marital/family status may prevent a candidate from meeting this requirement. However, unlike the earlier examples where having a good driving record or healthy lifting ability is a yes/no situation (you either have it or you do not) – being a single parent with six children may or may not prevent a candidate from meeting the 60% travel requirement. In such cases, ask the candidate about his/her ability to meet the job requirement itself, rather than the prohibited grounds:

YES – This job requires 60% travel. Can you do this?

NO - Do you have children that would stop you travelling?

YES – Can you relocate to Vancouver in six months?

NO - How would your spouse feel about relocating?

Do not use indirect questions or make comments designed to obtain answers without breaking the rules. “You look too young to have such an important job” is no different than asking “How old are you?” “That is an interesting last name – is it Canadian?” corresponds to asking “What ethnic origin are you?”

Candidates often use prohibited information on their resumes or volunteer it in interviews. Following up on this information by asking additional questions is still a violation of human rights legislation. Try to steer the interview away from the personal and concentrate on job-related qualifications.

WHAT RECRUITERS SHOULD DO

Try to accomplish the following matters in your interviews:

Set the stage. Ensure that your office is quiet and your phone is on call-forward. If you are in a noisy or hectic area, use a conference room. Map out an appropriate time-frame for the interview and avoid scheduling your interviews too closely together. If you are worrying about time, your interviewing skills will suffer.

Let the candidate know what to expect. Take the time at the beginning of the interview to advise the candidate on what is to follow. You may want to set a time-frame for the interview, advise who he/she will be meeting next and what the next step after this is.

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Take notes during or after. You may find that taking notes distracts you during the interview. If you do not take notes during the interview, set aside time immediately afterward to record all relevant information and thoughts.

Keep the interview on track. Try not to be thrown off by unexpected questions or candidates who ramble. Advise candidates at the start of the interview that you will answer any questions they may have at the end of the interview. Be prepared to curtail rambling, off-topic answers by a phrase such as "That's very interesting. However, perhaps you can tell me about....."

Draft an outline. Doing this before the interview will ensure that key questions are asked and that you finish the interview equipped with relevant information about the candidate and his/her experience and skills. You can also use the same outline with all candidates, thereby ensuring consistency.

WHAT QUESTIONS RECRUITERS SHOULD ASK

You should try to use a variety of questioning techniques. There are three basis areas of information that you are attempting to discover: facts and data about past history; opinions and beliefs about job-related issues; and examples of past behaviour. The following types of questions will assist you in eliciting this information.

Fact-Finding Questions. These questions provide you with facts and data about a candidate's current situation or past experiences. Basic fact-finding questions are close-ended (answered with a yes or no).

Example: "Are you still employed at this job?"

Other fact-finding questions can be structured to elicit a more detailed response by using an open-ended format:

Example: "What are your major responsibilities?"

Try to balance your use of close-ended and open-ended fact-finding questions. The danger in using too many close-ended questions is that the interview may turn into a verbal "tennis match" with short questions and answers being fired back and forth!

Probing Questions. Probing questions provide you with information about a candidate's feelings and beliefs, by asking opinions about certain items, or how he/she feels about completing certain activities.

Example: "How do you feel about having to reprimand your staff?"

"What do you think about this type of management style?"

Probing questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no". They can also be used to follow-up on a candidate's statements by repeating or reflecting their statements/feelings back to them. This will encourage them to elaborate on certain points.

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Example: "You mentioned disagreeing with your boss on that point. Can you tell me more about this?"

Behavioural Questions. Past behaviour is usually a predictor of future behaviour. By questioning candidates about their behaviour in past situations, you can gain a good idea of how they will perform in future situations and how this will fit with your job needs.

Example: "Tell me how you handled that situation."

You can also determine future behaviour by using "what if" questions. You may be interviewing a first-time manager who has never had staff before. Questions asking how they would deal with a particular situation should be good predictors of their actual on-the-job behaviour.

Example: "What would you do ifhappened?"

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11. BIOGRAPHY

Gerry O’ Connor, Toronto’s 2020 Irish Person of the Year, was born in Dublin, educated at Blackrock College and University College Dublin, and emigrated to Toronto in 1971.

Gerry arrived in Canada with \$100, two suitcases and no job or friends. His plan was to gain two years of Canadian business experience and move back to Ireland – that was 49 years ago, and he is still here!

During his successful Canadian business career, Gerry held several senior corporate positions. Gerry is a past member of the Board of Directors, The Toronto Region Board of Trade, one of the largest and most influential chambers of commerce in North America, with more than 13,500 members. He is also a Director, Volunteer Toronto and serves as a member, Investment Advisory Board, Spiritan TransCanada Province.

Gerry has been active in the Toronto Irish community for many years, including a four-year term as Chief Apostle, Apostles of Ireland, an organization providing Irish professionals with executive networking, cultural and social opportunities and events within the Toronto Region Irish Community. In his years since retirement, Gerry has devoted his time to volunteering and mentoring, applying the business experience gained during his business professional life to educate and mentor those who can most benefit.

In 2012, under the leadership of Eamon O’ Loughlin and Ambassador Ray Bassett, and with funding from the Government of Ireland, the Eamon O Loughlin Irish Canadian Immigration Center was launched in Toronto to provide a broad range of services to the Irish community in Canada. Working with Cathy Murphy, Executive Director, and drawing upon his personal experience as a new arrival in Canada, Gerry designed and facilitated a new weekly Employment Workshop for New Arrivals in Toronto. This program has provided orientation, education, support and mentoring in employment matters, including cultural adaptation, resume preparation, interview skills and coaching, networking and taxation matters to new arrivals in their quest to find employment and establish themselves in Canada. Since inception, more than 2,000 new arrivals from Ireland have attended, drawn from multiple functional disciplines, including law, finance and accounting, engineering, healthcare professionals, academic, business, technology, social sciences, and skilled and non-skilled tradespeople. This program has provided attendees with Canadian employment knowledge, insights and confidence, leading to many excellent career opportunities and successes. In 2016, Gerry was recognized with a Volunteer Toronto Legacy Award for his work at ICAN.

Since 2004, Gerry has completed more than 40 international volunteer assignments with CESO (“Canadian Executive Service Organization”) in Russia, Siberia, Republic of Georgia, Serbia and the Philippines designed to strengthen sustainable economic and social growth, funded by Global Affairs Canada. Gerry volunteers his time free. Within the Philippines, Gerry has completed 30 assignments which included teaching Business in six universities in addition to working with the Philippines Department of Trade and Industry to provide mentoring services and business expertise to develop small and emerging businesses and community cooperatives.

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Gerry was recently awarded the Governor General of Canada Sovereign Medal for Volunteers, designed to recognize exceptional actions or deeds that benefit Canada, arising from his volunteer work in the Philippines. He is included as a member of the Canadian Honours System. A formal government conferring ceremony is planned in 2020.