

Annual Report 2008



Report of the Chair — AGM Feb 2 09

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Our first vision in 2005 was to save the O'Connor House. We have achieved this having confirmation from the City's Preservation Office that it upholds the Ontario Heritage Act, Section IV 2003 designation of the three O'Connor Estate buildings. It must be protected; the landlords can not demolish.

We then wanted to bring it alive with Irish culture, heritage and learning—in the spirit of the first house of Irish immigrants in Toronto, providing a gathering place to enjoy quiet conversation and crafts, in addition provide meeting space to Toronto-Irish groups' leadership for executive meetings etc; as well as being a hub of learning: Instruments, Dance, Literary readings, Genealogy, and so on.

(i) Having first strived to work in tandem with the TCDSB for a win-win use of the buildings, we found it necessary to enquire first hand from the North York Planning dept what the exact uses were according to R3 zoning. Basically it confirmed education use in addition to local community cultural use, rather than the perceived reality of regular droves of people coming from across the city and beyond thus clogging the local neighbourhood with unwelcome traffic & parking issues. Perception often develops legs and imaginations can run wild as the above was not the original intention—apart from possibly two or three times annually a Field Day, Recital, Garden Party which would occur by use of a *Use of Schools Permit* from the TCDSB. .../turn to page 2

Board of Directors 2009

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Special points of interest:

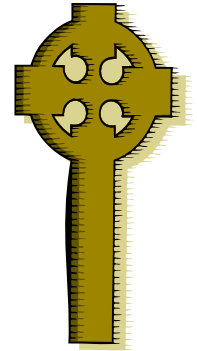
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- *Lease work*
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- (ii) Through a contract with *Rotman-Nexus*, we undertook a Survey (Summer/Fall) of the local community: residents, business, and social centres; as well as a variety of Educators; and our long time Donor/Supporter/Member base. The results of the Surveys validated our original vision and mission to bring the O'Connor Estate to life for the good of the local community and edification of all visitors. The education-base has already begun with the establishment last year of *Celtic Canadian Heritage Month* throughout the TCDSB system.



Proclamation of
Celtic Canadian
Heritage Month
March 2008
by TCDSB Trustee
Angela Kennedy

Fundraising in any organization or charity is always a challenge. People want to know their dollars are cared for, well-spent, respectful of their spirit of giving of their oft-hard-earned cash, and they want to see the results as were promised. While our original goal was a mere \$750k, due to time, inflation and deterioration while we worked hard to raise the cash, the inevitable happened, costs of our target increased.

- i) We made visits to many *sources of funds*: (April-Irish Cultural Society \$50,000/\$10k x 5 years on occupancy); (April-Minister of Finance, also Infrastructure, who asked for updated Repair/Restoration cost estimates, Feasibility Study and Business Plan with our application, due now); Ireland Fund and Ireland Chamber of Commerce—both asking for a proposal; as well as applications to City Grants (Culture Build for \$100k-windows) and (the Preservation Dept for \$10k roof repair); Letter of Intent for Ontario Trillium Future Fund; to the Erwin Taylor, and the Donner

“Continue engaging interested stakeholders—out of whose enthusiasm more funding will be successful.” Rotman-Nexus 2008

Foundations. While, but for the ICS we did not secure other large funds in 2008, be assured a very best effort was made and will be continued.

- ii) Summer 2008 we engaged *IntellectusPM*—a project management firm who roots are in heritage, architecture, planning, etc. Their task was to get repair & restoration cost estimates updated (from the 2005 KMA estimate) and done with three options: Basic moving-in condition; Education standard; and Museum level. The figures range \$2 thru a variable of \$3—4m, according to what standards we & the TCDSB agree on for each space.

The Lease between the TCDSB and O'CIHH was to be tailored to the unique situation that we are both in. The TCDSB with a heritage house which they'd intended on using as part of the school until finding that unaffordable; and O'CIHH recognizing a place of beauty and balance in a corner of the world in the city of Toronto where increasingly we find treasures knocked down and lost—that we felt was worth saving and putting to mutually good use. The Lease presented to us however was a Commercial Industrial document, not suitable, and requiring much time, engagement, expertise and negotiation to work out. The process continues—Dennis or Colman may speak to it in Q&A time as we move into new territory with Heritage largely in the picture.

- (i) O'CIHH is not committing to anything so onerous that it stretches to the realm of the impossible, yet wishes to continue on a win-win negotiating basis with the TCDSB.

Report of the Chair, continued

Beauty, Balance and Good-Will—is the enduring root of this project.

i) allow me to quote the *Prince of Wales, Charles*, who was featured on a program I happened across yesterday, to celebrate his 60th birthday last year. He talked to architects and planners about a vision he had to build an all-encompassing housing & business community for the convenience, edification, and enjoyment of people of all age and social income brackets. “Oh it can’t be done, planning doesn’t allow, don’t talk daft.....” Sound familiar? So he said, “I’ll do it myself!” Folks, if I had the money I would do this myself. *Check out the Village of Poundbury in Dorset, England*—planned, designed, built and maintained and kept a fatherly watchful eye over by Prince Charles himself. And I quote him: “Sustainability is closely tied up with beauty. If beautiful, and people feel good in their surroundings they will want to keep it going and they will sustain it.” “Take a look around Poundbury—can you tell who has money and who does not by these buildings?” No. And another: “The ‘rational’ tests the world toward destruction. After it is destroyed it is too late; who is going to put back together again what is gone. It’s too late then. If everything/everyone is destroyed, there is nothing/no-one.” “Somebody at the end of the day has to stand up for (natural beauty).” “Strive for excellence, and forget about elitism.”Inspiring people to aspire not so daft as some would think.

ii) *Volunteers, Supporters, Grassroots and Donors* are proof in the pudding of people who share this vision of preserving something of beauty and balance with 100% good-will as evidenced in their very generosity of time, talent and treasure. I never underestimate and always acknowledge and thank them one and all from the bottom of my heart—who have brought us this far in our work. God bless and thank you.

iii) Special mention: I would like to thank divine providence for putting *Dennis Timbrell* in our way. He has been a wonderful and generous help these past few months taking on errands and meeting engagements that had become difficult for our team on account of the long time we have been at this work. Dennis has extensive experience as an Ontario MP and also as an Hospital Supervisor as well as living in the O’Connor community; was on an Ecumenical Board, and appreciates the Historic value here. He has graciously given of his time and experience amid a life full of family and grandchildren. The divine touch that Dennis heard about us was through member, Mary McKenna while both waiting at the local garage! Dennis, thank you.

Financial Report

Year End March 31 2008

Charitable #:

BN 81563 3946 RR001

Revenue	\$52,061
Expenses	\$32,556
<i>Net Income</i>	<i>\$19,505</i>
Current Assets	\$65,226
Current Liabilities	\$4,357
<i>Balance</i>	<i>\$60,869</i>

We welcome your 2009 Annual Membership (\$50), Founding Membership (@\$100); also Donations (tax receiptable) are welcome. Please send to:

*O’Connor Irish Heritage House,
27 Crowland Dr, Toronto ON M9W 2S5*

Report of the Chair, cont'd

Culture, Heritage and Learning—described by our own ‘Paul’ as a three-legged stool, these are

already in the works. We just need the property in order, and transfer what we have started to it.

i) *Activities, Events, Festivals*: We have been obviously promoting and growing our culture through outreach over the past four years with events, our part in parades, festivals, and such (St. Patrick & Easter Parades, Beach Celtic Festival, the British Isles Show, Celtic Family Sundays, and so on).

ii) *Heritage & Preservation Toronto*: We are firmly entrenched in Toronto’s heritage over the past three years having garnered solid support from Heritage Toronto, the City Preservation people, local Councillors in the ‘footprint of O’C Farm/Maryvale,’ and local Historical/Heritage groups, not to mention our prestigious Toronto Heritage Community Award this past October 2008. The evaluation given us by Heritage Toronto was second to none.

iii) *TCDSB/Celtic Canadian Heritage Month*: We are presently on the learning/education/curriculum leg, to establish various elements along those lines. (continued below)

iv) A recent bonus to us is the *Archdiocese of Toronto*, specifically *Archives dept.*, with whom we are in talks about use of space for Archives which will be beneficial to the TCDSB community as well as the local community. Much of my early discovery of Frank O’Connor himself was the result of a visit to the Archdiocese Archives office—now almost full circle this opportunity is rooted in and accredited back to O’Connor’s generosity to the Archdiocese of Toronto. As developments occur, we will certainly share any news with our members & supporters.

The *Celtic Canadian Heritage Month* currently in the TCDSB (since March 2008) will eventually be extended through the TDSB and Private Schools as much as they are accept our invitation to express this Heritage through their Boards. What we establish will be open to all sectors and denominations of people and promoted as such—as it has always been. Our distinction is that we are a core Irish-immigrant group of people with a vision who stepped up and are making this work happen.

Closing Remarks and Thanks

In closing, my renewed thanks to one and all. Together we will get there. We have forever to take part with good-will and, inside productive working relationships. It’s been an exciting four years—and very busy— with this wonderful vision in sight. I am very grateful for our set of Board members, all of whom have busy lives and various other commitments—yet they have hung in and been supportive even when they did not know what was hitting us next. Yes, our time over four years has met with many hurdles, having jumped each one we thought we had jumped our last, but nay! - we also faced instances of the goal posts being moved hither and yond which kept us scurrying. Alas, my former good health has become strained to the point of overload and reluctantly I find myself unable to lead with usual cheer and vigour—as once I handled obstacles with great patience, deft and speed. Sadly and with reluctance I must step back. Please continue your support to the new Board: new faces and fresh energy. God Bless, thank you & heartfelt love.

<i>Mailing Address</i>	<i>Location</i>
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