



ST. PATRICK'S PARADE SOCIETY

165 University Avenue, Suite A200, Toronto, Ontario, M5H 3B8

February 26th 2006

Ontario Trillium Foundation
45 Charles Street East, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M4Y 1S2

To Whom It May Concern:

O'Connor Irish Heritage House -- Trillium Grant Application

I am writing on behalf of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Society to affirm our support for the O'Connor House Board in their efforts to restore a wonderful old property and develop it as a Centre for Irish Heritage and Culture, as well as providing a much needed home for the GTA's large and vibrant Irish and Irish-Canadian community.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade Society is responsible for putting on our community's annual parade, which brightens up the streets of Toronto every year on the closest Sunday to March 17th. Although the end result of our efforts is seen on just one day, namely the day of the Parade, our planning and fundraising extends throughout the whole year. We rely on the goodwill and generosity of the Toronto Irish community to help us raise the significant funds required to put on a parade of this nature. One of the challenges we encounter in these efforts is the absence of one common home or meeting place for the many different associations that we need to reach.

We believe that the development of the O'Connor House property as such a home would contribute greatly to organisations such as our own, and the Irish Community as a whole. It would provide a focal point for all community based initiatives, and also provide a great forum for parents to introduce their Canadian born children to their Irish heritage and ensure that the many great aspects of Irish Heritage & Culture, including our annual Parade, survive and prosper well into the future.

Emigration from Ireland to Canada has fallen dramatically in recent years, due to the strength of the Irish economy, and accordingly organisations such as the Parade Society will be increasingly dependent on "Second generation" Irish to keep their traditions alive. We are of the view that having such a meeting place for Irish & Irish-Canadian families is vital to ensuring that the next generation does indeed grow up with an awareness of, and affection for, their Irish heritage and culture.


In addition to the above general, community wide benefits, from the specific point of the view of the Parade Society, we see the following benefits:

- A venue in which to conduct fundraising and promotional events throughout the year.
- Improved direct access to members of the Irish Community in Toronto, by providing "one roof" under which the vast majority of our target audience and constituency will have a presence.
- Storage facilities for the many materials we need to keep from one year to the next – materials used in the preparation and decoration of the many Floats that make our Parade the spectacle that it is.

Also, we feel that the restoration of the property in question will certainly enhance the beauty of our City, and add another dimension to what it is we have to offer to tourists and residents alike. Our understanding is that were it not for the good work of the O'Connor House Committee, this property would probably have been demolished by now. As proud Torontonians, we are of the view that architectural gems such as this need to be preserved, not knocked down!

For all of the reasons above, the St. Patrick's Day Parade Society is fully supportive of the work being done by this dedicated group of volunteers. We have been very impressed by the commitment and professionalism they have shown and have no doubt that they will be successful in this important undertaking. We respectfully suggest that they are worthy of your support.

Yours Sincerely,



Jack Ferns
Chair (416-487 1566)