



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT McALEESE

As patron of the Ireland Park Foundation, it is with great pleasure that I greet all of those who have gathered in Toronto this week for the opening of Ireland Park.

Ireland's long history of emigration abroad means that there are certain places with which we share a special bond. Canada is one such place, a country which has welcomed hundreds of thousands of Irish people over the years. Many of these people arrived in this great city close to the site of Ireland Park. At the time of greatest need, Toronto opened its arms to receive some of the thousands of Irish people escaping the Famine. Their descendents, along with more recent arrivals, ensure that there continues to be a strong, vibrant Irish community in Toronto.

The spirit of that community is exemplified in the wonderful achievement represented by Ireland Park. It is a fitting tribute to those Irish people who came before us, forced to leave the land of their birth, by hunger and poverty. It also serves to remind us that we must continue tackling these problems in our world today.

I am deeply honoured to be Patron of the Ireland Park Foundation and to be here to open Ireland Park today. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of those who have worked so hard over the last few years to make this vision a reality, particularly Robert Kearns, the Chairman of the Board of the Ireland Park Foundation, and his fellow directors. I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of the many individual donors to the project, the Mayor and the Council of the City of Toronto, for making available the land for Ireland Park. I would also like to recognise the substantial financial contributions of the Canadian Federal and Provincial Governments and of the Irish Government.

Finally, I would like to send my very best wishes to all of those here for a most enjoyable week of events.

MARY McALEESE
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND