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**DESPITE CHALLENGING ECONOMIC TIMES -  
ICCUSA TRADE MISSION A MAJOR SUCCESS**  
*Third annual trade mission strengthens Massachusetts links*

**BOSTON** - "Ireland is open for business" was the recurring theme of the 2009 Ireland Chamber United States - New England Chapter [ICCUSA] Trade Mission to Belfast and Dublin. A 25 member delegation visited Belfast, Derry and Dublin to strengthen current ties with Massachusetts and to pursue new business opportunities.

"The red carpet treatment was really rolled out for the entire delegation throughout this trip," **commented Paul Dwyer, a Belfast native and President of ICCUSA New England.**

"We really wanted to focus on the potential for investment for employment, technology and life sciences, something that really impressed the delegation at the University of Ulster at Derry and Coleraine. From the outset we made it clear that we were going to take the delegation into the heart of the communities, to places they wouldn't normally visit and show the opportunities available for expansion and regeneration," **Dwyer added.**

A highlight of this year's mission was the addition of the Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment [MOITI] to the trip as both co-sponsors and attendees. The addition of MOITI was of particular significance as the quasi-public agency is often the first contact and line of communication for Irish companies interested in doing business with the Commonwealth and vice-versa.

"An important aspect of our trade strategy focuses on trade missions to foreign countries. These missions help forge business connections and open new markets for Massachusetts companies. Exporting is a proven growth engine for our economy and bolsters the Commonwealth's reputation as the global center for innovation," **commented Ted Carr, Executive Director of MOITI.**

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The delegation arrived in Belfast and spent the following 5 days on a whirlwind tour packed with business development meetings, briefings/tours, receptions and formal dinners. The delegation represented a cross section of the economy including the life sciences, bio-tech, travel and tourism, financial services, real estate/mortgage, entrepreneurial, non-profit, and legal sectors.

**Highlights of the Belfast portion of the trip included:**

- A briefing and tour of Belfast's **Titanic Quarter** and the massive development project underway that will attract all sectors of the economy to the area.
- A briefing from the **West Belfast and Greater Shankhill Enterprise Council** on the Shankhill Road with special guest MP, MLA, and **Minister of Finance for the NI Executive Mr. Nigel Dodds**. The council is working with public officials, area businesses, and the local community to put people to work and continue the effort to break down historic societal barriers with a focus on economic development and jobs.
- A dinner followed that evening with the West Belfast and Greater Shankhill Enterprise Council and local entrepreneurs with special guest **Gerry Adams MP for West Belfast and leader of Sinn Fein**. Mr. Adams thanked the delegation for making Northern Ireland a focal point of its mission and emphasized the importance of continued links with Massachusetts, New England and the entire United States. Also on hand from the Belfast Media Group was **Máirtín Ó Muilleoir - CEO of the Irish Echo** newspaper.
- A visit to **Andor Technology** - Belfast's world class digital camera manufacturing business which was established in 1989 out of Queen's University in Belfast. Andor employs 190 people in 15 offices worldwide and distributes its products to 1,200 customers in 55 countries.
- A tour of **Delta Point and Packaging** which provided the group with an opportunity to see first hand the process by which packaging for dry goods such as cereals are created - from original design and print through quality control, packaging and shipping. The company has production plants in both China and India and employs 135 people.
- A reception at the **President's Club of Belfast** hosted by Belfast entrepreneur and CEO of Barnabus Ventures **Mr. Mark Finlay**, followed by a dinner with local business executives hosted by the **Academy Restaurant of the University of Ulster's Culinary School** which provided the delegation with an intimate setting by which to meet and greet Belfast counterparts and discuss possible trade opportunities.

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The group also visited the **University of Ulster – Magee College** in Derry and the **University of Ulster’s Center for Molecular Biosciences** at Coleraine. Highlights of the visit in Derry included presentations of the incredible advances in community development, alternative energy, and robotic technology at Magee College; a visit with the **Lord Mayor of Derry Gerard Diver at University of Ulster’s Office of Innovation**; and a briefing and tour of a state of the art facility in Coleraine that could become a model for advances in health and biomedical sciences throughout the entire island and beyond.

Dwyer appreciated the opportunity to return home on this occasion for the purpose of seeking out new trade and investment opportunities on behalf of ICCUSA and to share with the delegation the positive change that has occurred throughout much of Northern Ireland since the end of the era in Irish history which has come to be known as “The Troubles”.

“When I left Belfast 15 years ago, there was a Cathedral but no Quarter [*referring to what is now known as the Cathedral Quarter of Belfast – one of the 7 quarters or districts of the city*] and to see how Belfast has regenerated is quite something. The cross-community endeavor that is developing here is very encouraging and it is time to get focused and continue the investment plans for West Belfast and Greater Shankill,” **said Dwyer.**

**The Dublin portion of the mission focused on travel/tourism, international trade, and biotechnology. Highlights included:**

- A reception at the **Dublin law firm of Dillon Ustace** which included a briefing and discussion of the current real estate and financial markets in Ireland and the economic outlook for the foreseeable future.
- A tour of the **Dáil [Irish Parliament]** during which delegates had the opportunity to view Dáil deliberations and meet several TDs.
- **Dublin City University (DCU)** hosted the delegation for a plenary session which provided a unique forum by which representatives of Ireland and Massachusetts provided presentations in their respective fields. MOITI’s Executive Director Ted Carr and Business Development Director Pat Bench spoke about the unique position Massachusetts offers to Ireland and to Europe as the point of entry to the United States for international trade due to the specialized and well established network of business, political, and higher education communities in the Commonwealth.
  - **ICCUSA member Mr. Frank Reynolds, CEO of InVivo Technologies of Cambridge, MA** gave an incredible presentation highlighting cutting edge R&D the company is engaged in for the treatment of acute and chronic spinal cord injuries. Invivo’s medical breakthroughs may very well prove life changing for many individuals with limited mobility due to spinal cord related injuries.

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- A formal reception at the **US Ambassador's Residence at Phoenix Park** in Dublin. Although President Obama's nominee for Ambassador to Ireland, Mr. Dan Rooney, was not in attendance, the group was hosted by the professional staff at the residence. [Rooney's nomination has yet to be confirmed by the United States Senate]. **Cllr. Eibhlin Byrne the Lord Mayor of Dublin**, several business executives and entrepreneurs attended the event which provided an excellent networking opportunity for all.
- A visit to **Ulster Bank** for a presentation of the global economic outlook with specific detail to Ireland - south and north - by a **noted Irish economist Pat McArdle**.
- The delegation was hosted by the **Hibernian Club at St. Stephen's Green for a reception honoring the Special Olympics Massachusetts and Special Olympics Ireland**. Former Boston Police Commissioner and current Chief Inspector of the Garda Inspectorate - the auditing unit of Ireland's national police force the Garda Síochána - **Kathy O'Toole** was in attendance at the event. Bob Johnson, ICCUSA member and CEO of Special Olympics Massachusetts gave a moving presentation which highlighted the organization's achievements on both sides of the Atlantic. Special Olympics Ireland was well represented at the event and all attendees were interested in further substantive discussions regarding the proposition of an on-going partnership between Massachusetts and Ireland.

"In recent months the press has been proclaiming that the Celtic Tiger is dead. Ireland has taken a blow, no doubt, but it's not dead. It's a Phoenix that has risen from worse blows. Ireland will wean itself off its dependence on property and foreign direct investment. Its people have the talent and education to create a true knowledge based economy like ours here in Boston. That's why ICCUSA's recent trade mission was so important and fruitful. There is a significant and growing business relationship between Boston and Ireland. We, in ICCUSA, want to be part of that relationship through 'thick and thin'," **commented ICCUSA board member and chair of the trade mission Fergal Woods**.

**## END ##**