



Low-interest loans for rental development, wider driving licence recognition, and ratification of trade agreement are key to Ireland's economic expansion

- Low-interest loans for rental property development, recognising driving licenses of more nationalities, and formally ratifying CETA (Comprehensive Economic Free Trade Agreement) will boost Irish economy.
- Brexit, increased connectivity, and the opening of an IDA office in Toronto present major opportunities to grow Canadian business presence in Ireland
- Government must act now to capitalise on these opportunities and avoid losing business to other EU countries.

Low-interest loans for rental property development, recognising the driving licenses of more nationalities, and formerly ratifying CETA (the Comprehensive Economic Free Trade Agreement) will help boost the business environment for multinationals in Ireland and have a significantly positive effect on the economy, according to Ireland Canada Business Association (ICBA).

The ICBA, which represents some of the largest Canadian, and Canadian-owned companies in Ireland including **Air Canada, Irving Oil, Canada Life (Irish Life), Shopify, and Voxpro**, has proposed the measures in its pre-budget submission to government ahead of Budget 2019.

1. Low-interest loans for the development of rental accommodation:

The severe shortage of rental accommodation in our main cities is having a sharp impact on ability of companies to attract talent, and is a key obstacle to economic expansion. Canada, with 30% of the population relying on rental housing to meet their housing needs, faces similar issues.

In order to boost supply, a state agency called the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has recently been created, through which the Canadian government offers lower cost loans to developers of rental accommodation. On launching, the programme was oversubscribed by a factor of five. The ICBA would encourage the consideration of similar initiatives in Ireland to expand the supply of economic well-maintained rental accommodation.

2. Driving license recognition

Ireland currently has agreements with a number of non-EU states that allows citizens of those nations to drive in Ireland without having to re-sit their driving test. Drivers from outside of

those countries may drive in Ireland for a maximum of 12 months, after which point they must undergo a number of driving lessons followed by a full official test. The ICBA believes that this is discouraging people from countries with whom there is no such agreement (including a number of Canadian provinces) from applying for jobs outside of Dublin, where public transport is limited.

By expanding mutual driving licence recognition to more countries, particularly those with large potential labour pools for Ireland, the ICBA believes that the competition for talent in the regions of Ireland can be significantly relieved.

3. Ratification of CETA

CETA is a hugely beneficial economic trade agreement that effectively allows European countries to trade with Canada, as if Canada were a member of the EU. Benefits include:

- Removing 99% of tariffs.
- Ending restrictions on open access to public procurement contracts
- Opening up the services market
- Offering predictable conditions for investors
- Helping prevent illegal copying of EU innovations and traditional product

While Ireland currently enjoys all of the perks of CETA, the government has as yet failed to officially ratify it. In contrast, many other European countries, including Denmark, Spain and Portugal, have given it their full, official support.

The ICBA believes that failure to ratify CETA in a timely manner is sending a negative message to the Canadian government, and diminishes the attractiveness of Ireland as a location for Canadian FDI. The association is calling on the Irish government to ratify CETA as soon as possible to avoid the potential negative economic of further delay.

Executive Director of the ICBA, Kate Hickey, believes that by addressing these three key areas of concern, doing business in Ireland will become far easier, not just for Canadian companies, but for businesses across the board:

“The key concern of the Ireland Canada Business Association is that Ireland retains its attractiveness for Canadian companies who locate here to access the European market. We are already seeing a number of positive benefits through our relationship with Canada, including a 40% increase in employment via Canadian firms in recent years. But Brexit, increased connectivity, and the opening of an IDA office in Toronto present major opportunities to further grow the Canadian business presence in Ireland, and we must ensure that we in the best position to capitalise on these opportunities.”

We regularly ask our members, who include some of Ireland largest employers, what obstacles lie in their path to further expansion. Time and time again we hear the same answers: the rental crisis, keen competition for talent, and Ireland’s failing to ratify this major trade agreement in a timely manner. By addressing these key concerns the Irish government can help make this country a far better place to do business”

Ends.

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Key facts about Canadian Companies in Ireland

- There are over 70 Canadian companies in Ireland with an employment base of almost 13,000 - an increase of over 40% since 2014.
- The IDA established an office in 2018 in Toronto, Canada.
- In 2016, Enterprise Ireland client company exports to Canada grew by 7.3% to €282 m
- Canada represents Ireland at the IMF and the World Bank and is credited for achieving favourable terms for Ireland during the IMF bailout negotiations.
- Due to Brexit and strained US relations, investment in Europe through Ireland is becoming the preferred option for many Canadian companies.
- Canadian Companies in Ireland include: Brown Thomas, Voxpro, Circle K, Kobo Software, Irish Life, Royal Bank of Canada, Bank of Montreal, Air Canada, Timbercreek Asset Management, Celestica, Irving Whitegate Oil Refinery, Teknicor, Irish Life, Optel, SNC Lavalin, Shopify, Yroo, Absorb Technology, Group Eleven Resources.

High-profile investments by Canadian companies into Ireland

- 2018: Teknicor, a specialist in data centre architecture, opens its European HQ and plans to create up to 100 jobs in Dublin.
- 2018: Brookfield takes major stake in Imagine Communications – estimated €100m.
- 2017: PressReader, a digital newspaper platform, opens its new European Headquarters in Dublin as it sets out to fill 65 positions in Ireland.
- 2017: TELUS International acquires technology BPO Voxpro – estimated €150m.
- 2016: Irving Oil acquire Whitegate Refinery, Cork (Ireland's only oil refinery).
- 2015: eSentire, a leading cyber-security company, opens its European HQ and Security Operations Centre in Cork and plans to create close to 100 jobs over five years.

About the ICBA:

The Ireland Canada Business Association is the representative voice of Canadian companies In Ireland. It has the mandate of promoting and developing trade and industrial links between Ireland and Canada. The Patron of the Association is the Canadian Ambassador to Ireland. The ICBA has the active participation of Ireland and Canada's most prominent business leaders as its core supporters and influencers. It is strongly affiliated with the Ireland Canada Chambers of Commerce in Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Vancouver, Ottawa and Calgary.