

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
HONORARY CONFERRING
Tuesday, 16 June 2009 at 12 noon

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY **PROFESSOR BRIGID LAFFAN**, Principal, UCD College of Human Sciences, University College Dublin on 16 June 2009, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Literature, honoris causa on The Hon. **HILARY M. WESTON**

It is an honour for me to present the Honourable Hilary Weston, born Hilary Frayne, for an Honorary Doctorate at UCD on June 16th, Bloom's Day, in the city of her birth. Hilary Weston was born in Dublin in 1942, the eldest of five children. In 1966, she married Galen Weston and the family moved to Toronto in 1972.

We celebrate her long and varied career as business woman, public servant, philanthropist and esteemed member of the Irish Diaspora.

Mrs. Weston spent over two decades working in business and the fashion industry. As Deputy Chair of Holt Renfrew, she promoted Canadian design and merchandise internationally and has had a close association with Dublin's flagship store, Brown Thomas.

In 1997, Hilary Weston was appointed as the 26th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, only the second woman to hold that high office. Her goal was to alter the perception of the office of Lieutenant Governor by making it more accessible and relevant. She used the office to advocate on behalf of women and young people. Mrs Weston visited shelters for women and rallied government and voluntary organizations to address issues of poverty and violence. She drew public attention to people working with the homeless, in hospices and as mentors of at-risk young people.

In 1998, she created the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award to honour those who work in community groups and expanded the programme to recognize an outstanding volunteer in each Ontario secondary school. Mrs Weston donated her salary to provide business internships and job training for young

people through First Connection. Her interest in education is a long standing one. Mrs Weston was the Founding Chair of the Mabin School in Toronto.

Since leaving public office in 2002, Mrs Weston chaired the Renaissance ROM Campaign, a campaign that has raised more than \$250 million for the Royal Ontario Museum. It was the most successful funding raising campaign in Canadian cultural history. She is patron of numerous organizations dealing with social issues, notably the Hospice Association of Ontario, the Landmine Survivors Network and the Yonge Street Mission. Mrs Weston has received many honours, notably the Order of Ontario 2001, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, 2002, and the Order of Canada 2003.

In addition to Hilary Weston's immense contribution to Canada and other countries, we acknowledge and celebrate her membership of that global family, the Irish Diaspora. Speaking to the Houses of the Oireachtas in February 1995, the then President Mary Robinson, choose as her theme, *Cherishing the Irish Diaspora*. Mrs. Weston has retained strong links with Ireland and Dublin. She founded the Ireland Fund of Canada in 1979 and continues as the Honorary Patron of this non-partisan, non-denominational organization which funds community projects in Ireland. She is a trustee of Angel's Quest in Dublin.

All of the above are public roles and represent an immense contribution to society in so many spheres and at so many levels. Mrs Weston has a long standing interest in homes and gardens, co-authoring two best-selling books, *In a Canadian Garden* (1989) and *At Home in Canada* (1995). Hilary Weston, the private citizen, is wife to Galen, mother to her two children, Alannah and Galen, and grandmother to Maia. I will end with a quote from that larger than life, albeit fictitious Dublin woman, Molly Bloom. She said in Ulysses, 'We're a capital couple are Bloom and I; He brightens the earth, I polish the sky'.

Hilary Weston has certainly polished the sky throughout a long, full and varied life. We honour her immense contribution today at UCD.

Praehonorabilis Praeses, totaque Universitas,

Praesento vobis hunc meam filiam, quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneam esse quae admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Litteris; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.