

HEADLINERS

This is Huge!

The sheer scale of the International AIDS Conference in Toronto had to be seen to be believed. Thousands of delegates and journalists were in attendance.

Well...where do I start? I suppose the beginning would be as good a place as any.

We are now into day two of the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto and, as they say over here, by golly it's huge! We actually visited the conference centre a few days ago to get a feel for the place and more specifically so we wouldn't get lost when we finally had to work here. You know like it is on your first day at school or college.

Then I first saw the main registration area I was amazed by the sheer size of the place. That was when they were setting up and it was full of empty stalls. It was even more daunting when it was crammed packed full with thousands of people milling about all over the place on registration day. There were people from every conceivable corner of the globe and obviously almost as many languages and dialects to add to the mix. It was amazing!

I had a warm feeling knowing that all these people were here for the one cause. The politicians, celebrities, the people of the press, people living with HIV, people who live with people who are affected by the disease, all together to fight for this cause. It was and still is great to be part of it.

Even though the size of the registration area was vast and there were hundreds of staff it still took two days for everyone to register and the line went right round the block, as they might say here.

There are so many people here that the opening ceremony had to be held in a baseball stadium, the home of the Toronto Blue Jays. Any normal venue, like Derry's Millennium Forum or Belfast's Odyssey Arena wouldn't have given access to the enormous crowds of delegates wishing to attend.

In the morning we were extremely tired after dancing the night away and still we went to hear Bill Clinton and Bill Gates talk. The conference room where they spoke held 3,000 people alone and I would say that there were just as many left outside the doors.

We on the other hand are with the media pack and we can access to practically all areas. This room was just one of the many of a similar size that are being used here. The size of the audience woke me up better than any amount of Starbucks would ever be able to do.

If this is just the beginning, then I can't wait for the rest of the week. So far it has been fun meeting different people and learning about different cultures but more importantly it has been rewarding to know that I am learning and also making a contribution.

About this article

This article was written by Emmet Barr, 16, from Belfast, who was one of three Headliners members who went to Toronto to cover the International AIDS Conference. Their work was published on the [BBC Blast](#) website.

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