

CANADIAN FRIENDS OF UKRAINE MEET WITH OFFICIALS AND NGO'S IN UKRAINE

September 7, 2009 - Representatives of Canadian Friends of Ukraine (CFU) recently met with government officials and NGO representatives in Ukraine to discuss issues of mutual interest to Canada and Ukraine, including projects currently funded by CFU.



The bilateral consultations included a meeting with Ukraine's Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Volodymyr Khandogiy (pictured at left). The one-hour meeting, held at the Minister's office in Kyiv, focused on cooperation in the area of cultural and educational initiatives as well as projects related to promoting international awareness of the Holodomor-Genocide through multi-lingual exhibits and publications. At the close of the meeting, Margareta Shpir (CFU

President) and Lisa Shymko (Chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Centre) presented the Minister with an honorary certificate and custom-made desk clock marking the 20th anniversary of Canadian Friends of Ukraine.



Since CFU's sister organization — the *National Movement for Democracy and Reform in Ukraine* — better known as RUKH, was founded twenty years ago in Ukraine, a number of events were held in Kyiv to celebrate this anniversary. Rukh's current leader and former foreign minister, the Hon. Borys Tarasyuk, met with representatives of Canadian Friends of Ukraine to discuss Rukh's historic legacy and its efforts to bring transparency to Ukraine's political process. Mr. Tarasyuk was presented with CFU's commemorative certificate marking

the organization's 20th anniversary. CFU's delegation also met with Ivan Drach, a founding member of Rukh and the honorary chair of Ukraine's National Committee to Commemorate Rukh's formation.

Canadian Friends of Ukraine also participated in the unveiling of the Art Arsenal Museum Complex in Kyiv known as *Mystetsky Arsenal*, officially opened by President Viktor Yushchenko. The museum is located on a former military site in Kyiv's Pechersk district. The art complex, which President Yushchenko has termed Ukraine's "*Louvre*", opened with a collection containing rare Trypillian artifacts, ancient sculptures from the pre-Christian era, as well as Baroque-era gilt wood-carvings, and works by Alexander Archipenko. Other officials attending the opening were Vasyl Vovkun, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ivan Vasyunyk, Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine, parliamentarian Petro Yushchenko (pictured at right), and Chair of the *Za Pomisnu Ukrainu*



organization, artistic icons (pictured at right), Oksana Bilozir, Dmytro Hnatiuk, ancient artifact collector Oleksandr Polishchuk, cabinet ministers, and other well-known political and cultural personalities.



Having acknowledged the important role played by Canadian Friends of Ukraine in drafting the text of Canada's Holodomor recognition legislation, CFU's representatives were also invited to contribute recommendations during a private, VIP viewing of Ukraine's proposed *Holodomor Victims Memorial* in Kyiv, which includes the Candle of Memory, Hall of Memory, and Wall of Memory. The Hall of Memory exhibit, whose design and content has yet to be finalized, is a circular subterranean structure, located beneath the Candle of Memory.

Representatives of Canadian Friends of Ukraine were also invited to address the opening meeting of the Ukrainian Social Services organization of Kyiv, chaired by Kyiv-based family medicine specialist, Dr. Ruslan Dobrovolskyi (*pictured holding CFU's honorary certificate*). The meeting discussed a number of pressing social issues affecting both seniors and youth in Ukraine's capital. The discussion examined possible cooperation with CFU on initiatives in the area of health services for the elderly, the development of palliative care facilities, youth counselling, and student scholarships.



Canadian Friends of Ukraine's ongoing projects include the establishment of a Canadian-sponsored library centre in the city of Mykolayiv and support for Ukrainian education programs and youth scholarships in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

Canadian Friends of Ukraine continue to maintain a strong partnership with the National Parliamentary Library of Ukraine, the site of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Centre. With funding support from CFU, the Centre continues to provide research services for Ukraine's legislators, cabinet officials, and their staff. This fall, Canadian Friends of Ukraine, in cooperation with staff from the National Parliamentary Library of Ukraine, will once again fund a special project monitoring the political platforms of candidates running in Ukraine's upcoming presidential election. The bilingual report will be distributed to foreign embassies, the OSCE, other international organizations.

Lisa Shymko is a member of Canadian Friends of Ukraine and Director of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Centre.