



The Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program (CUPP) was established in 1990, and is devoted to giving the brightest up-and-coming minds in Ukrainian politics the chance to experience the workings of Canada's democracy first-hand.

Several political offices on Parliament Hill had the privilege this past fall of having Ukrainian interns working in their office for a two-month period. 33 delegates from Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program descended on Parliament Hill this past September-November, which marked the 22nd year of CUPP's operations.

This year was a lively one for the CUPP interns, as they were in Canada during Ukraine's Parliamentary elections, which took place on October 28, 2012. I was a member of the Canadian delegation which was in Ukraine during their election acting as an election monitor, and witnessed firsthand some of the undemocratic happenings surrounding

Ukraine's 2012 Parliamentary elections.

As would be expected, the Ukrainian interns in Canada kept a keen eye trained on the election outcomes as well. In response to the international outcry over the undemocratic practices surrounding Ukraine's elections, several of the interns in Canada spoke up.

The first of which is Yaroslav Barkov, the CUPP intern who was working in my office. Below is a statement he had prepared, but did not get the opportunity to deliver, for the House of Commons:



Shown with Peter is Yaroslav Barkov visiting from Ukraine, who worked in his office as an intern for several months.

"Dear Mr. Speaker, honorable Members of Parliament, and guests:

First of all, I'd like to thank the representatives of the Canadian Parliament for their support of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program, which contributes to the development of Ukrainian-Canadian relations, and supports the democratic transformations in Ukraine.

In this light, the support of the Ukrainian Diaspora in Canada should also be acknowl-



edged. Particularly, the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Programs (CUPP) program director, Mr. Ihor Bardyn.

I thank also Member of Parliament Peter Goldring, to whom I have had the privilege to serve as an intern, for his contribution as well.

As a new generation Ukrainian, I am deeply concerned about what presently happens in Ukraine. As you know, on 28 of October, 2012, we [Ukraine] had the Parliamentary elections. They were questionable in many respects, some believe they were not fair. There are considerable problems with the calculation of votes – not all of which had been counted by this day.

Several days ago, [CUPP] participants protested before the Embassy of Ukraine in Canada against falsifications of elections, violation of human rights, rolling up of democracy and the freedom of speech. This protest was possible because we are in Canada. In Ukraine it may bring negative consequences to its participants.

I would appreciate the attention of the Parliament of Canada to the situation with Ukraine’s election.

Dear Members of Parliament, thank you for your support and attention.”

Another CUPP intern was also very outspoken and articulate on the matter – Ms. Oleksandra Gaskevych – who was interning in the office of Member of Parliament Randy Hoback. Below is a statement she released:

“I was born in 1991 in Kyiv, Ukraine, the same year we achieved independence. I don’t remember the student Granite Revolution of 1990, I don’t remember the proclaiming of independence, and I was too young to care about establishing the first constitution. But my life has been, and will always be, intertwined with my country’s journey to democracy.

I grew up in an age of high expectations. We were a newly independent Ukraine, and I simply assumed that with each passing year life would get

better, democracy would grow stronger.

Recently, I watched as the Supreme Court of Canada announced its decision on the contested election results in the riding of Eto-bicoke Centre. As an intern with the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program, it was one of the many opportunities I have had to witness the workings of the Canadian government and judicial system. To many Canadians, the fact that the court was able to rule without political interference and that both sides accepted its decision without complaint may not



Peter often attends the formal ceremonies at the Embassy of Ukraine to honour the interns, encourage them, and to speak of their great futures.



seem remarkable. For me, it was an inspiring moment.

Canadian democracy may have its discontents but there are certain foundational beliefs -- such as the separation of judicial and political powers -- that are deeply embedded in Canadian culture. And those beliefs appear to me to be inviolable. I dream that one day my countrymen will come to share that bedrock democratic principle.

Leading up to the Oct. 28 election, I checked Ukrainian online media every half hour. Would these elections mark another tarnished moment in Ukrainian political life? Or would the process meet international election standards and give Ukraine a reason to stand tall among the democratic countries of the world?

As a Ukrainian citizen and an aspiring journalist, I can attest that the voting at the poll in the Embassy of Ukraine in Canada went smoothly. However, as I received information about the voting in Ukraine, and the flagrant abuse of the electoral process, I was struck with a bitter truth. My government is simply uninterested in public opinion and they unabashedly neglect basic democratic processes.

Numerous violations were confirmed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Ukrainian World Congress. The deputy chairman of the Central

Election Commission, Zhanna Usenk-Chorna, declared the elections "the dirtiest in the history of Ukraine." Most importantly, the Central Election Commission denied the leaders of the opposition, Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko, the opportunity to register as candidates.

Moreover, the media, owned and controlled by a few key players, did not grant equal media access to all candidates. There were also incidents of violence and intimidation of candidates and campaign workers, and reports of the use of invisible ink in certain polling stations. Finally, there have been reports of mass -- rather than individual -- casting of ballots.

If the voices of Ukrainians are silenced it will be a step backwards from the future we sought through independence in 1991.

After decades of being afraid to speak out behind the Iron Curtain, it is almost unbearable to think that my country may be losing the democratic rights for which we fought so valiantly.

I came to Canada in search of a greater understanding of parliamentary democracy and now I find myself asking for much more. I ask you, Canadians, to urge your government to take concrete steps against Ukrainian government officials and Ukrainian businesses that



Peter is shown here on a panel of speakers at the Embassy of Ukraine preparing for questions and comments from the interns from Ukraine.

are impeding the electoral process.

The Canadian government can and should lead an international effort to apply pressure to ensure that the judiciary remains independent. The Canadian government should impose sanctions on the officials responsible for the electoral violations. And Canada should refuse to issue visas to those officials and ban banking services by Canadian financial institutions for officials and businesses connected to the regime.

Even though Ukraine has a rich history and culture, the principle of one person, one vote is relatively new to our political institutions. Without a truly free election we cannot move for-

ward. We cannot live up to the hopes and dreams our parents had when we gained our independence. Most of all, we cannot enjoy the basic freedoms of speech and association that are so admirably protected in Canada.

Individually, our voices are only a whisper. With your help, we can change the fate of my country.”

We, as Canadians, should be proud of our democracy, as it is sparking a push for hope and change in countries such as Ukraine, where democracy has yet to be fully entrenched.

UPDATE: Upon Peter’s return to Canada following the 2012 Ukrainian Parliamentary elections, he wrote a letter to Minister Baird, Prime Minister Harper, Minister Fantino, and Minister Uppal, highlighting the importance of exploring religion in Ukraine and similar former Soviet entities to get a greater understanding religion in Ukraine.

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This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.

Your Opinion Matters...

Question #1 Did you follow the 2012 Ukrainian Parliamentary election?

Yes No

Question #2 Do you think Canada should play a bigger role in helping countries like Ukraine in attaining a stronger democracy?

Yes No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
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