



In September 2011 Peter Goldring was asked, as Vice Chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Group, to attend the annual Bloor West Village Ukrainian Festival in Toronto. These are his observations.

### Celebrating Independence - Bloor West Village Ukrainian Festival

The Bloor West Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival is the largest Ukrainian Street Festival in North America, and includes a parade, different forms of entertainment and a film festival.

The objectives of the Festival are to: Promote and foster Ukrainian culture and traditions as integral elements of Canada's multicultural mosaic; provide a venue for Canadians of Ukrainian heritage to reacquaint themselves with their rich roots; introduce Ukrainian culture to the general Canadian public and tourists thereby encouraging tolerance, understanding and goodwill between all segments of Cana-

dian society and create a free event that's fun for the whole family and across all age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Toronto is the centre for Ukrainian culture in Eastern Canada. By the early 1950's, approximately 84,000 Ukrainians resided in Ontario, and Toronto became the new "Ukrainian capital". As they have done all across Canada, Ukrainians made significant marks in every facet of Ontario life by contributing to the local communities. The Toronto Ukrainian Festival is a celebration of the Canadian Ukrainian cultural contributions in Toronto.



Past parade marshalls include Senator Raynell Andreychuk and Luba Goy, television star of the Royal Canadian Air Farce fame who later entertained on stage as Queen Elizabeth II.

The Festival started in 1995 as the result of the twinning of Toronto and Kyiv, and then came under the umbrella of Ukrainian Canadian Congress Toronto Branch as one of its projects. Attendance in the first year was estimated at 3,000; however the Festival has grown to attract audiences of 350,000 and more.

The Festival gives an opportunity for contemporary professional and amateur artists and



performers of Ukrainian heritage who celebrate Ukrainian culture through music, dance and visual arts to showcase their talents to the Ukrainian community and the wider community as well.

One of the focuses for this year's festival was the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Ukrainian immigrant to Canada.

The performers – dancers, vocalists and musicians – came not only from the Toronto area but also from across Canada and the USA. Included were well known artists such as Luba Goy, Ukraina and, from Kyiv, MANDRY.

Edmonton was represented by the Verkhovyna Ukrainian Song & Dance Ensemble, the cultural ambassador of the Edmonton Branch of the Ukrainian Youth Association. The Ensemble is comprised of The Verkhovyna Choir, the Dunai Ukrainian Dancers, and the Verkhovyna School of Ukrainian Dance, which performed "The Letter," an emotional and colourful musical and dance journey through the pages of Ukrainian Canadian History, dedicated to those whose determination and accomplishments helped develop Canada and ensure that Ukrainian Canadians forever became an integral part of the tapestry of Canadian culture over the past 120 years.

It was a return to familiar places for Mr. Goldring, who was born in Toronto and spent his childhood in the area the Festival is held, including attending Keel Street Public School and as a child playing in High Park.

When he addressed the crowd Mr. Goldring talked about Ukrainians in Canada, the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Group and current Canada-Ukraine relations.



Former Prime Minister, The Right Honourable John Turner who led the 2004 Orange Revolution election re-run monitoring mission to Kiev Ukraine, enjoying the events of the day

"It is good to be here once again for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Bloor West Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival and to celebrating the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Ukrainian settlers in Canada.

"As Vice-Chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group I bring the best wishes of all your Members of Parliament for a successful festival. The Canada-

Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group is the largest of its type in Parliament and works closely with Ukrainian-Canadian groups and the Embassy of Ukraine.

"Canada was the first western nation to recognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and our two great countries have been close friends ever since. Certainly 120 years of Ukrainian history in Canada is something worth celebrating. That small trickle of immigrants who first landed in



Halifax in 1891 became a giant wave that has grown to 1.2 million Ukrainian-Canadians today.

“Since 1991, Canada has invested considerable effort and resources in support of Ukraine’s democratic transformation and political and economic reform as well as its integration into Euro-Atlantic and international structures and institutions. These efforts have further accelerated since the “Orange Revolution” of December 2004. Canadian election observers have helped ensure free and fair Ukrainian presidential elections in December 2004 and parliamentary elections in March 2006 and September 2007. Canada welcomed Ukraine’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in May 2008 and supports Ukraine’s aspirations for eventual North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership.”

In 1999 Mr. Goldring was first to call Holodomor a genocide in Parliament. In 2008, at the annual Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Astana, Kazakhstan, he spoke forcefully against a Russian attempt to rewrite the history of the 1932-33 Holodomor.

“The more than 8 million who perished in Ukraine in this planned famine, the Holodo-

mor, did not die from the ravages of nature, nor the scourge of pestilence, nor by the obliteration of war, but by the hand of man.

“Seventy-five years ago, the world took no action against such a tragedy. There were no commemorations. Since then, with every horrible incident of a people killed by their own government, we are painfully reminded of the high costs paid by future generations for past inaction against the horrors and genocides inflicted by the human race on itself.



Paraders at the Toronto Bloor Street West Ukrainian Festival include numerous Ukraine cultural dancers and performance groups in ethnic costume.

“By adopting this resolution and commemorating the Holodomor, we will take an important step forward in stopping this cycle. We remember the victims of the Holodomor, of the dark side of humanity, and by remembering we help the world guard against those who would repeat such genocide.

“In May of 2008, the Parliament of Canada recognized the Holodomor as an act of genocide.

“I wish to make one more point that is salient to this issue. Media in Montreal reported that the Holodomor may have been crop failure. I grew up on a farm that had very poor soil, more clay than loam. Growing crops was a challenge even with good weather. I envied farmers with good land.

“When I first visited my wife-to-be’s family

farm in Northern Alberta, I was struck by the rich deep soil. They have farmed that land for more than 100 years without crop failure, coming to Canada from Ukraine in 1905. Last year I was election monitoring in the Poltava region of Ukraine, 300 Km east of Kiev. I was struck again by the richness of the land and similarity with Northern Alberta. I even commented to local citizens about this similarity.

“Rich land such as this is not subject to catastrophic crop failure by pestilence or drought. Ukraine’s famine was diabolically man-made.

“Those that believe that the Holodomor was simply a famine are wrong. The word Holodomor comes from two words: starvation and

murder/kill. A famine is mostly created by “nature”; by weather, by insect infestation, by poor soil. The Holodomor was created by one “man”.

Recently Mr. Goldring called for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to conduct a study of the Canada-Ukraine relationship, with a historical review of the past 20 years since independence and projections for the future, focussing not only on the geopolitical landscape of the region but also on trade, human rights and the regional economy.

**Update:** Mr. Goldring and The Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group has expressed deep concern about the seemingly politically motivated persecution, and arrest, of Yulia Tymoshenko.

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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...**

**Should Canada delegate a parliamentarian specifically to do more to develop a special economic and political association with Ukraine?**

Yes       No

**Do you think there is a benefit to Canada in helping to develop emerging democracies?**

Yes       No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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