



Natural Resources Minister Stresses Canada's Special Relationship

The celebration of Ukrainian independence is really the celebration of the future of Ukraine said the keynote speaker at the Aug. 27 Edmonton concert commemorating the fourth anniversary of Ukraine's independence.



Marco Levytsky/Ukrainian News

Natural Resources Minister Hon. Anne McLellan

"There is no doubt that Ukraine faces formidable challenges," said Anne McLellan, Canada's Minister of Natural Resources and MP for Edmonton Northwest.

"There is equally little doubt it is making significant progress. What we are really celebrating here today is the future - for Ukraine, as it launches its new era of economic and political reform; for the friendship between Canada and Ukraine that continues to grow stronger, and for the continued freedom and prosperity of the people of these two proud nations," she told the 500 people celebrating at Hawrelak Park.

McLellan stressed Canada's special relationship with Ukraine, both in terms of the contributions Ukrainian pioneers made to the development of Canada, and the assistance that Canada gives the fledgling democracy.

"When it comes to a give-and take relationship, it was Ukraine that gave

Canada its most precious commodity - its people. Canada's strength as a nation today is, in part, the result of the courage and imagination that Ukrainians brought to our young country. They have played a valuable role in Canada's evolution, particularly in Western Canada and Alberta. Now it is our turn to help Ukraine," she said.

"Four years ago this week when Ukraine declared its independence, Canada was honoured to be the first country to recognize this new entry into the global community. We were also the first nation to sign a "special partnership" agreement," McLellan noted.

The minister added that she was delighted to welcome President Leonid Kuchma when he visited Edmonton last fall.

"As we spoke, I could see the enormous desire and commitment on his - and his country's - part to establish a democratic, market-

oriented, prosperous nation. This determination has impressed many," she said.

McLellan noted several areas which are priorities in Canada-Ukraine relations including nuclear safety and technical assistance. Another area in which Canadians are helping Ukraine is in energy. Several Alberta oil companies are working to help Ukraine develop its resources, she said.

Just three days before the independence celebration, McLellan also signed a new program between the Government of Canada and the University of Alberta to help Ukraine develop a new legal-education program which will be delivered at the Ukrainian Centre for Legal Studies in Kyiv.

She cited the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program that brings Ukrainian university students to Canada to view a developed democracy firsthand. One such student, Alexandra Zvarych from Kyiv worked in her Parliamentary office for four months, and spent a week in Edmonton at the end of June.

"Alexandra was a keen observer of the Canadian political system and it was impressive to see her very quickly learn about Canadian government and politics," said McLellan.

(With files from Ukrainian News)



Dunai dancers performing at Independence Day celebrations in Edmonton