



# Canadians Celebrate Canada Day in Kyiv

by Marta Dyczok

considered a major victory, even by the highest standards. In December 1991, when the initial euphoria had begun to fade, sober-minded Ukrainian leaders realized that this was not the time to indulge in self-love, but time to roll up their sleeves. And so now, after five years, the government has a new victory — a Constitution. The young and energetic Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko has already also contributed his common sense to the political environment and reforms.

With the admission of Ukraine to the Council of Europe and our official entry into such Western initiatives as NATO's "Partnership for Peace" program, Ukrainian society has begun to come to peace with itself. Some of its stresses, only so natural for the post-totalitarian era, have been lifted. Ukrainians have started to care about the international image of their country and its participation in the international processes. Ukraine's diplomatic service has quickly become professional and is promoting a positive image. People now believe they indeed can and will live in an independent country of their own, as do 200 other nations in the world.

We know that the beginning of all victories and defeats lies in ourselves. Success depends on how governments work, how well regions take care of themselves and whether each one of us takes our destiny in our own hands. All this has a deep meaning for Ukrainians in Ukraine.

Though the crisis is still looming, though there are still uncertainties, doubts and social challenges, we are optimistic about our future. Serious dangers are still ever-present from external and internal sources.

Ukraine has a ruined economy, unemployment, monetary and budget problems, impoverishment of the population, a decline of science, culture and education, and the possibility of political confrontation.

No doubt such an optimism can be comprehended only "from within" -- if, as we did, you have personally walked over this critical five-year-long self-established road of Ukrainian statehood. One thing is certain. Once everyone in Ukraine acquires an invincible absolute faith in his and her country, the rest of the world will become more amicable and will believe in us, too.

Wherever they are, on July 1 Canadians observe Canada Day. This year Canadians in Ukraine celebrated their country's 129th birthday all weekend, their celebratory spirit increased by events in Ukraine. A party atmosphere filled Kyiv early Friday morning, June 28, when Parliament adopted a Constitution, and continued through Sunday evening, June 30, when pop singer Iryna Bilyk closed the Ukrainian Youth Day concert in the park.

Canada Day celebrations were led by the Canadian Embassy in Kyiv. To mark the occasion the first Canadian sugar maple was brought to Ukraine. The sapling was ceremonially planted in Kyiv's Taras Shevchenko Park by Canadian Ambassador Christopher Westdal and Ukrainian Environment Minister Yuriy Kostenko.

"In its own small way, this tree, which came directly from Canada, will offer Kyivans respite and cleaner air, as well as the living beauty of our national symbol, the maple leaf," said the Ambassador. "if our relations are anything to go by, I'm sure this maple will take root firmly in Ukraine's rich soil."



*Planting a Canadian sugar maple in Kyiv's Shevchenko Park on the occasion of Canada Day. On the left - Ukraine's Environment Minister Yuriy Kostenko; kneeling - Ambassador Christopher Westdal.*



*Dual celebrations in Canada's Embassy in Kyiv: Toasting the adoption of Ukraine's Constitution and reception on the occasion of Canada Day. L-r: Ivan Yemets, Head of Ukraine's Central Electoral Commission; Ambassador Christopher Westdal; Volodymyr Stretovych, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Policy; William G. Miller, American Ambassador to Ukraine; and Borys Kozhyn, Ukrainian MP and Vice-Admiral of Ukraine's navy.*

The Ambassador hosted a formal Canada Day reception, which was attended by prominent Canadians and Ukrainians, including RUKH leader Vyacheslav Chornovil and the Head of the Constitutional Committee, Volodymyr Stretovych. He shared the enthusiasm of the Ukrainian politicians upon adoption of the Constitution and in an interview said he was delighted that an honourable compromise had been reached by political forces in Ukraine. He added that the Constitution is an important step for Ukraine towards political accountability and would be key in attracting foreign investors to Ukraine.

Trade and investment are important aspects of Canada's relationship with Ukraine. Over the past six months, two-way trade between these states has grown by 60 per cent from 1995. However, despite the steady and encouraging progress, Ambassador Westdal noted "there is still so much that can be done here in the business spheres, particularly in the energy sector." *(Ukrainian Weekly)*