

Good morning and welcome to the Ukraine at a Crossroads Conference in the Canada's national capital. Canada is an ideal spot for this conference for many reasons:

1. Canada is home to one of the largest and most influential Ukrainian diaspora's in the world.
2. Canada has historically enjoyed a special relationship with Ukraine and continues to consider Ukraine a foreign policy priority.
3. Canada's interests in Ukraine are based upon values and principles that have been consistent and reliable for decades. These values and principles are objective and free of other external influences such as Russian gas or other geopolitical considerations.
4. Canada is an emerging global power and has demonstrated its commitment to democracy and human rights around the world

As many of you know the Ukrainian Canadian Congress brings together and represents the interests a very large and dynamic community. A community with a 120 year history in Canada that is rich with cultural centers, schools, libraries, museums, institutes, churches and just about every kind of Ukrainian organization you can imagine – from coast to coast. As the Congress, we have represented the interests of our community for over 70 years by uniting the community and speaking with one common voice to government.

As the voice for Canada's Ukrainian community the UCC together with all its member organizations published in the fall of 2011 their Briefing Note on the Situation in Ukraine which outlines several key recommendations to the government of Canada, these include:

- (a) Engagement – Any actions by the Government of Canada must not result in the isolation of Ukraine.

Otherwise, Ukraine will slip back into Russia's sphere of influence thereby losing its sovereignty. The strategy should be two-pronged: i) government to government pressure; and ii) support for civil society.

- (b) Review of Priorities for Canada-Ukraine Relations (RoadMap) signed 2 years ago between Canada and Ukraine.
- (c) Refocus CIDA strategy – CIDA should focus on supporting Ukrainian NGOs that establish and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.
- (d) Robust election monitoring. The October 2012 Parliamentary elections in Ukraine will be the only meaningful opportunity to balance power as today both the Parliament and Judiciary are controlled by the President. Sending election observers on the day of the elections, although necessary is not enough. Long-term monitoring and reporting are critical. There is a serious concern with the upcoming parliamentary elections. How can they be declared free and fair if the leaders of two opposition parties, including the leader of the official opposition are not able to participate?
- (e) Support for independent media – today there are significant threats to media freedoms.
- (f) Reinstate Radio Canada International Ukraine Programming – ensure Canadian values are broadcast in Ukraine.

I trust that this conference will assist us in reevaluating those recommendations. Our vision and objective for this conference include:

1. Bringing together the foremost experts on Ukraine with decision makers in North American and Europe to craft a Re-evaluate UCC's Ukraine Strategy
2. It is not a forum to tar Ukraine or its leaders but rather to find solutions to the challenges Ukraine faces today and in the future.
3. Our objective is to develop constructive strategies on engaging Ukraine and its people to ensure Ukraine returns to its democratic trajectory and continues to be a beacon for human rights in the region.

In conclusion as a co-organizer and patron of this conference I would like to thank the conference organizing committee for putting together what has shaped up to be the preeminent international symposium on Ukraine. In particular I would like to thank and recognize

Bob Onyschuk, Jars Balan, Borys Potapenko, Vlodko Zarytsky and Taras Zalusky.

Also I would like to thank and recognize all the conference sponsors as well as the LUC for in addition to being a conference sponsor they brought a large youth contingent to this conference. I'd also like to thank the League for their leadership in organizing with the support of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress the Hearings by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs this week.

Finally I'd like to thank our speakers, discussants and all the participants for giving their time to this very important topic and for caring about the future of Ukraine and its people.

Best wishes for a successful and productive dialogue.

Thank you.