Helping Our Communities and Culture Flourish

Policy Recommendations on Multiculturalism

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) is a strong advocate of multiculturalism, both as a practical tool to preserve minority languages and cultures and as a source of strength uniting our diverse Canadian nation. The UCC together with its member organizations, provincial councils and local branches supports programming that will assist in mitigating the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the renewal and expansion of investments in multiculturalism and heritage programming, including robust arts and cultural funding, and support of heritage education including language instruction.

During this time of extraordinary challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, Ukrainian Canadian organizations have responded to increasing needs for support of the 1.4-million strong Ukrainian Canadian community and beyond. Community organizations from coast to coast have organized and implemented many projects and initiatives to deliver relief and aid to the most vulnerable members of our communities, ensure the continuing education of our youth, support seniors, assist in combatting the negative effects of social isolation and social separation, and deliver cultural and arts programming in difficult circumstances.

Our Recommendations

- Mitigate impacts of Covid-19 on non-profit organizations and community arts
- Support women, families and youth
- Revitalize heritage language schools
- Support Ukrainian education in school boards
- Memorialization and recognition

Recommendations

Mitigate impacts of Covid-19 on non-profit organizations and community arts

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on not-for profit organizations that provide educational, cultural and arts programming—organizations that enrich the lives of all Canadians.

Community cultural organizations have been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic. Community cultural organizations such as dance, music, visual arts groups and others rely on events to raise revenue to fund their operations, which have had to be cancelled. As Canadian vaccination rates rise, and provinces and municipalities reopen, these organizations will need additional support in order to return to their pre-pandemic activities.

When surveyed by the UCC in February 2021, 90% of organizations stated that they were “concerned” or “very concerned” about their ability to fundraise and maintain donations; 81% were “concerned” or “very concerned” about their ability to maintain a revenue stream; and 73% were “concerned” or “very concerned” about their ability to maintain membership.

These organizations also face uncertainty about the possibility of future public health measures that may necessitate the cancellation of future events. Government support programs have, in the vast majority of cases, focused on support for professional arts groups, leaving community and amateur organizations ineligible for support.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to introduce funding opportunities for which non-professional and community-based arts, cultural, musical and dance groups will be eligible.

The UCC supports the announcement in Budget 2021 to invest “$200 million through Canadian Heritage to support local festivals, community cultural events, outdoor theatre performances, heritage celebrations, local museums, amateur sport events,” and “$300 million over two years, starting in 2021-22, to Canadian Heritage to establish a Recovery Fund for Heritage, Arts, Culture, Heritage and Sport Sectors.” The UCC will work with community organizations to ensure that they are able to access this support.

Additionally, community charitable organizations have seen drops in donations as Canadians have faced increased economic uncertainty. Community organizations that own or control property and rely on rents for revenue are dealing with the decreased ability of their renters to make payments; they will therefore have difficulty paying property tax and covering static overhead costs.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to introduce an enhancement of the charitable donation tax credit and to work with municipalities to provide relief for not-for profits and charities on property tax payments.

Support women, families and youth

Numerous studies demonstrate conclusively that women have borne a disproportionate burden in dealing with the negative effects of the pandemic, in both their professional and family lives, and in caring for children.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to ensure that government programs – including those aimed at addressing the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on women are adequately financed and that accessibility for such programs is accessible and broad.

The UCC notes that Budget 2021 proposes investments totaling up to $30 billion in the next five years in early learning and child care, with the goal to bring fees for child care down to an average of $10 per day. Many Ukrainian organizations provide quality day care for children and the UCC will work to ensure that their perspectives are included in further developing these new programs.

The realities brought on by the pandemic have highlighted the need for affordable and dependable access to the internet. Organizations and companies have moved much of their activities online; many children are attending school online, and many essential services are only accessible online.

For many Canadians this has created either increased financial burdens or left them unable to participate in community life. Some of these new realities are likely to remain in place even following the end of the pandemic and the return to in-person activities. The UCC notes increase in investment in the Universal Broadband Fund in Budget 2021.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to develop programs to support Canadians who require assistance accessing dependable internet service, and in the longer term, ensure that competition in the marketplace is robust by setting aside new wireless spectrum for new market entrants.

The UCC believes it is critical to provide youth with opportunities to gain work experience and the skills they need in today's competitive job market, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many of the UCC's provincial councils, local branches and member organizations help youth apply for the Canada Summer Jobs Program, which helps provide valuable experience and skills that lay the foundation for a successful career.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to ensure that the Canada Summer Jobs Program and the Youth Employment Strategy consider the needs of youth in ethno-cultural organizations.

Revitalize heritage language schools

The Ukrainian Canadian community has long supported the preservation of minority heritage languages in Canada, as they add not only to the richness of Canada's cultural mosaic but maintain a critical connection to history. Community-run heritage schools now reach only a fraction of youth and most exist only in urban areas.

The UCC will continue to work to ensure the retention of the Ukrainian language as a mother tongue, as well as to ensure that Ukrainian language instruction is available, accessible, and affordable for families.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to institute a federal tax credit for community-based heritage language instruction and cultural activities.

As education moved online during the pandemic, heritage language schools, boards, educators, students, and parents responded to the new challenges of online learning with determination and commitment. The increase in online learning opens future opportunities for students who live in remote areas to attend community heritage schools.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to work with the UCC and other representatives of ethno-cultural communities to develop supports for heritage education in the context of increased online education.

Minority languages add to the richness of Canada's multicultural mosaic

Support Ukrainian education in school boards

In the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, some elementary school boards offer bilingual education in Ukrainian and English, supported by their provincial education ministries. However, in recent years, some school districts have encountered challenges that negatively affect the delivery of these programs.

The UCC supports a coordinated approach among its members and provincial councils to advocate for the structural integrity and longevity of Ukrainian education in school boards across Canada.

Memorialization and Recognition

In 1944, the totalitarian Soviet communist regime exiled the Crimean Tatar People, the indigenous people of Crimea, from their homeland. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were forcibly and violently deported to Siberia and Central Asian regions of the USSR. Nearly half lost their lives during the first year of exile. The Soviet regime prohibited the Crimean Tatar People from returning to Crimea for almost 50 years.

In November 2015, Ukraine's Parliament recognized this crime as an act of Genocide against the Crimean Tatar People and established May 18 as the Day of Remembrance of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People. When surveyed by the UCC ahead of the 2019 federal election, all four of Canada's national parties responded that they support the recognition of the deportation of the Crimean Tatar People as a Genocide.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress calls on Canada to recognize the deportation of the Crimean Tatar People as an act of Genocide and establish May 18 as the Day of Remembrance of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar People.

During the First World War, 8,579 Ukrainians and other Europeans were unjustly interned in 24 camps across Canada, enduring hard labour, long periods of separation from their family, and harsh physical conditions. Recognizing this dark chapter in Canadian history is a critical component of how we work together to end prejudice and discrimination wherever they appear.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to table legislation establishing an annual National Day of Commemoration of Canada's First National Internment Operations (1914-1920).

Many members of our community endured the privations and injustices of Communism. Others are descendants of those who were forced to flee their homeland due to the oppression and tyranny of Communism. Others are descendants of innocent people murdered by the Communist regimes that occupied Ukraine and eastern Europe for decades. The UCC supports the announcement in Budget 2021 of $4 million to support the completion of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism. The Ukrainian Canadian community and the UCC were instrumental in ensuring that a Memorial to the Victims of Communism be built in Canada's capital.

The UCC calls on the Government of Canada to ensure the completion of this important project in the nearest possible time.

The UCC has long advocated for the establishment of a Ukrainian Heritage Month in Canada to recognize the important contributions of our community to Canada's society. When surveyed by the UCC ahead of the 2019 federal election, the leaders of all of Canada's national parties indicated their support for designating September as Ukrainian Heritage Month.

In June 2021, a bill was introduced in the House of Commons in first reading to establish September as Ukrainian Heritage Month in Canada. The UCC calls on Canada's Parliament to adopt this legislation.