



Governor General of Canada's State Visit to Ukraine

At the request of the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, along with her husband, His Excellency Jean-Daniel Lafond, will conduct a State visit to Ukraine, from April 23 to 26, 2009.

The State visit to Ukraine will focus on Canada's ongoing support for the country's democratic transformation and economic reform. Canada was the first Western nation to recognize Ukraine's independence in 1991. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is focussing its resources on the issues of governance—more specifically, electoral, administrative and judicial reform—and strengthening civil society. The State visit will also highlight the historic ties that connect Canada and Ukraine, and the strength of our partnerships. There are more than one million Canadians of Ukrainian origin living in Canada.

A delegation of Canadians representing a variety of fields—including diversity, governance, arts and culture, civic engagement and youth—will play an active role in Their Excellencies' meetings with civil society. Information about the visit and members of the Canadian delegation is available at www.gg.ca.

To showcase the importance of Canada's relationship with Ukraine, Their Excellencies hosted a cultural event at Rideau Hall on April 15, 2009. They welcomed the Ambassador of Ukraine His Excellency Ihor Ostash and Ukrainian artists such as dancers Kostyantyn Voynov and Anna Nesvitaylo from the Atlantic Ballet Theatre of Canada, and pianist Serhiy Salov.

Excerpt from a speech delivered by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada.



"The bonds of fellowship between us are bridges that span the ocean and reach across borders. Consider for example the fact that Canada is home to the largest Ukrainian population in the world outside of Ukraine and Russia.

On December 2, 1991, Canada became the first Western country to recognize Ukraine's independence, and we are committed to supporting every effort by the people of Ukraine to adopt the democratic values and principles of a country based on the rule of law.

My husband Jean-Daniel Lafond and I believe that sharing knowledge and experiences is what State visits are all about and is part of what we like to call cultural and human diplomacy. A diplomacy that emphasizes the need to weigh the interests of some against the needs of others. A diplomacy that is not indifferent to the lives of the people and that encourages civic engagement.

In the course of this friendship tour, we will be accompanied by a delegation of Canadians who represent several key sectors of our society, from the arts and culture to the promotion of civic life, and youth. It is with the assurance that together, we will be strengthening the strong ties that already exist that we are undertaking this State visit."

Follow the visit through photos, videos and speeches at www.gg.ca. Visit www.citizenvoices.gg.ca to join in the discussion by reading blogs and contributing to forums.

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Excerpt from an address by His Excellency Ihor Ostash, Ambassador of Ukraine.

"Ukrainians appreciate Canada's unfailing support of our country in such crucial areas as helping us cope with the consequences of the Chornobyl catastrophe, supporting our accession to NATO and WTO, and providing technical assistance aimed at implementing a range of democratic reforms. I must also declare my gratitude on the historic step for Ukrainians all over the world that was made here in Ottawa in May 2008, when Canada officially recognized the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine as a genocide against the Ukrainian people. We truly appreciate the friendship between Ukraine and Canada and believe in its further deepening for the benefit of our nations.

We are also thankful to Canada for being home to millions of Ukrainians who came here to seek their destiny. We are proud of these children of pioneers, who, for over 100 years, have been contributing to a strong and prosperous Canada. We are also very grateful for their efforts to maintain and develop Ukrainian traditions and culture that, nowadays, is a very important and significant part of Ukrainian culture.

We...believe that your meetings in Kyiv and Lviv, considered as the cradles of Ukrainian culture, will further promote our high-level dialogue and strengthen the vivid spirit of the multi-faceted co-operation and interaction between Ukraine and Canada as true partners and allies."



The Governor General with the Ambassador of Ukraine and members of the Ukrainian Community at Rideau Hall.