



# Priming the Fourth Wave

## Renewing Immigration from Ukraine

by Eugen Duvalko, Executive Director of the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society

### CUIAS

### Community Involvement in Immigration to Canada

The number of new faces in the Ukrainian Canadian community shows that there is a revived migration of Ukrainians to Canada. However, statistics suggest that the total number of immigrants from Ukraine is very modest.

Canada is expected to welcome between 190,000 and 210,000 immigrants this year. A good estimate indicates that only 1,200 to 1,800 immigrants will be from Ukraine or Ukrainians from other parts of the world. With the historic relationship that exists between Canada and Ukraine, and given the interest expressed by Ukrainians to make Canada their home, why is this number so low?

The experience of the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society (CUIAS), located in Toronto, confirms that there is a keen interest on both sides of the ocean in immigration. Some individuals will continue to realize their desire to immigrate themselves or to help a relative do so. However, it remains that greater numbers of immigrants can only be fostered by an organized immigration campaign.

This extremely low number is not for lack of interest. CUIAS is deluged by in-person, letter and telephone inquiries about immigration. Another indicator of demand, is the number of immigration lawyers and consultants that are kept in business in Canada and Ukraine by immigrant hopefuls. Certainly the economic and political situation in Ukraine presents a force that drives Ukrainians to seek a better life elsewhere. Large numbers have already moved to the United States, Europe, Israel and Australia. Conversely, the Ukrainian Canadian community, motivated either by community self-preservation or personal interest, wants to attract new people. If, the push and pull factors of immigration are so evident, then why hasn't a larger migration materialized?

The answer lies partly in the disrupted migration of Ukrainians to Canada during the Cold War and partly in the current way

that Canada accepts immigrants. Contrary to the commonly held impression, Canada does not use quotas to determine who gets into Canada and from what country. Instead, the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration has three main streams, each with its own well defined set of selection criteria, under which it accepts immigrants. These programs are applied equally regardless of country of origin. A Ukrainian applicant would therefore have to fit into one of these programs in order to immigrate. Theoretically, there is no upper limit to the number of Ukrainian applications that Canada is willing to process.

Most Ukrainians will be accepted as Independent Immigrants. Another term for this category is the Skilled Worker Movement under which an immigrant is selected if they have significant experience in an occupation that has some demand in Canada. That immigrant should also have a university education, some knowledge of English, be healthy and have no criminal record. Furthermore, they should possess between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per family with which to resettle in Canada. Successful applicants not only have to fit this criteria but they should demonstrate to the Visa officers that they can establish themselves in a new country.

Ukraine represents a large pool of potential immigrants that do meet these occupational and educational and even financial requirements. Unfortunately, the mechanism of this program is poorly understood and many people are even unaware that it exists. This program also suffers because potential immigrants lack information about Canada and its Ukrainian Canadian community. They are unable to realistically envision themselves in Canada. Potentially qualified immigrants are often discouraged by the high cost of processing fees and the lengthy processing times.

The next group of immigrants are the Family Class. Under the very narrow definition of family, spouses are allowed to sponsor their spouses and minor children. Adult children are allowed to sponsor their parents. Many new Ukrainian Canadian

families have been created by transoceanic marriages and facilitated by this program. However, this family class immigration program does not help in the reunification of siblings or cousins. Those that have been in Canada forty years now no longer have the close connection that will permit them to sponsor under this program.

Thirdly, Canada will accept some 30,000 people that fall under the U.N. definition of refugees. This definition is designed to provide a haven for those fleeing government persecution. Currently, Ukraine is not viewed as a refugee producing country and very few claims are approved. The environmental and economic collapse of Ukraine are not grounds to be accepted as a refugee.

On the surface there seems to be little opportunity for an ethnic community to effectively stimulate immigration. The Canadian government's immigration process is established on the basis of its own priorities and interests, and there appears to be little willingness to consider special immigration programs. All immigrants are accepted on a case by case basis.

### Ways to Play an Active Part

The history of the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society and other community agencies suggests that there are a number of ways that interested Canadians may play an active part in the immigration of Ukrainians to Canada.

The original founders of CUIAS were motivated to start the society in the mid



CUIAS - Staff (l to r): Bohdan Mykytiuk (President), Ewa Martyniuk, Anna Tucka, Motrya Toroshenko, Allysia Goldsworthy (student placement), Irka Tomki, Eugen Duvalko (seated)