

### Partners in Civil Society Program

# Ukrainian Journalists Study Canadian NGOs

## Role of the Non-Profit Sector in Civil Society

The non-profit, or "third" sector, is a new phenomenon in post-Soviet society whose role is not well understood by the general public, government or business. Like other post-communist countries, Ukraine has been witnessing a rather vigorous growth in the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) over the past several years. However, the prevailing attitude in most of these societies remains one of expecting the state to take the initiative in improving the quality and delivery of social services. At best, unfortunately, government officials do not understand what positive role NGOs can play in society, and, at worst, they distrustfully guard against these organizations over which the government cannot exercise direct control.

As a result, the non-profit sector has been slow to develop in Ukraine. Legislation which would regulate the non-profit sector and promote its development does not exist. Businesses are preoccupied with their own difficulties and survival during the

economic crisis. Although many do give charitable donations to various causes, this is mostly done haphazardly, and without an understanding of the role professional NGOs can play in ensuring that donated funds get spent efficiently.

One prospective way to remedy this situation is to raise the awareness of NGOs among the general public, government officials and businesses, and to increase their understanding of the positive and critical role the non-profit sector plays in a civil society. With this goal in mind, the Eurasia Foundation initiated discussions with NGO leaders, media representatives and international assistance organizations which promote civil society development in Ukraine. With the support of the International Renaissance Foundation, USAID and the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), through its Partners in Civil Society Program, the Eurasia Foundation developed a program concept to educate journalists and media organizations in Ukraine about the non-profit sector and its role in civil society.

Through a competitive process, the

program selected a total of 32 journalists, media personnel, NGO public information officers and production specialists, to travel in groups to Canada, the United States and Western Europe. The 15-month program involves a well-coordinated strategy of seminars, media coverage competitions, grants, overseas study visits, awards and incentives. Each supporting organization contributed, in part, to the program. The CIDA-funded Partners in Civil Society Program participated with two of its partners, the West Ukrainian Resource Centre (URC) and Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) in a two-week study visit to Canada by seven Ukrainian journalists and media representatives.

## Canadian Component

An eight-person delegation arrived in early October for a two-week study tour of Canadian media organizations and journalistic facilities in Ottawa, Toronto and Winnipeg. In the course of their visit, they met with representatives of Canadian NGOs and social service agencies, government departments, media outlets, marketing and public relations firms and education facilities. Their schedule also included meetings with a variety of journalistic groups, social scientists and Ukrainian organizations.

"The goal of the study visit is not only to introduce the Ukrainian journalists to the attitudes, relationship and nature of coverage that Canadian media provides to the non-profit sector," stated Tony Berezoweki, Program Manager of Partners for Civil Society. "It is also to provide a context for understanding the essential role and need for the non-profit sector in Canadian society. By appreciating why charities and non-profit organizations exist, and why they are required within our communities and social network, the Ukrainian journalists will better comprehend the role of the third or civil sector in all societies and why the media support and promote that role as an essential community service."

The visit's most memorable moments were not always those which the organizers anticipated. In Winnipeg, it was the sheer volume of the operations at the Harvest Foodbank which overwhelmed the Ukrainian visitors. The fact that a Canadian city even needed such a service - and on such a



DENNIS LEWYCKY

*Ukrainian journalists study Canadian media. L-r: Pavlo Giner (Editor-in-Chief, "Shabat Shalom" newspaper, Dnipropetrovsk); Ivan Kozelskyi (Editor, "Kolos" newspaper, Stara Syniava, Khmelnytska Oblast); Nina Kolomyets' (Leading specialist, "Zaporizka Pravda" newspaper, Zaporizhia); Severyn Goudz (Public Relations Officer, West Ukrainian Resource Centre, Lviv); Oleksandr Masliukov, Zaporizhia Resource Centre, NGO liaison officer, Zaporizhia); Anatolij Ivanyuchenko (Special correspondent, "Ukrainsky Pivden" weekly, Mykolayiv); Olga Baysha (Editor-in-Chief, "Novyny" TV Agency, Kharkiv); Lesya Smuk (translator); Anatolij Zahravenko (Editor, "Znamianski Visti", Znamianka, Kirovohradka oblast).*