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UCC 75th Anniversary Celebrations and Tour of Ambassador Shevchenko in Saskatchewan

■ **JUNE 15, 2016. REGINA.** The Ukrainian Canadian Congress' (UCC) 75th anniversary celebrations continued with the official visit of Ukraine's Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Andriy Shevchenko and UCC Interim Executive Director Olya Grod to the province of Saskatchewan on June 9-11. They met with government officials, academic, business and community leaders and Ukrainian students during their three-day tour of Regina, Yorkton and Saskatoon.

At the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in Regina on June 9, Ambassador Shevchenko, and UCC National Executive Director Olya Grod, UCC Saskatchewan Provincial Council President MaryAnn Trischuk, and UCC National Development Director Lesia Spolsky were introduced to the Assembly by the Honourable Greg Ottenbreit, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan-Ukraine Relations.

Ambassador Shevchenko and members of the UCC met with the Honourable Don McMorris, Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan; the Honourable Corey Torch, Speaker of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly; the Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Education; the Honourable Jeremy Harrison, Minister Responsible for Immigration, Trade, Innovation and Tourism, representatives of the Saskatchewan Police College and the RCMP Cadet Training Program; and Ukrainian students from the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. Ambassador Shevchenko also met with representatives of the Petroleum Technology Research Centre.

On the evening of June 9, Ambassador Shevchenko, Olya Grod, Lesia Spolsky and MaryAnn Trischuk attended a reception and banquet with Yorkton's and Canora's Ukrainian Canadian community at St. Mary's Cultural Centre in Yorkton.

An evening celebrated with true prairie hospitality, local dance groups *Troyanda* and *Kalyna*, and local musicians provided lively entertainment. The evening highlighted the close personal and cultural ties between Ukrainians in Saskatchewan and Ukraine—across many generations.

The Master of Ceremonies of the Banquet was Ken Krawetz, former Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan. Cathay Wagantall, (MP Yorkton-Mellville), the Honourable Gregg Ottenbriet, MaryAnn Trischuk, Jen Fedun, President of the UCC Yorkton Branch and UCC Executive Director Olya Grod addressed the guests. The Mayor of the City of Yorkton, His Worship Bob Maloney, brought greetings. Ambassador Shevchenko delivered the keynote address.

"Our community was most appreciative of the Ambassador's presentation as it reflected on the current situation in Ukraine and the progress that is being made both politically and in civil society, stated MaryAnn Trischuk, UCC Saskatchewan Provincial Council President. "Ambassador Shevchenko was the first Ambassador from Ukraine that we have had visit our Yorkton community."

The next morning, Ambassador Shevchenko and the UCC delegation visited Saskatoon, where they visited the Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School, where Ambassador Shevchenko addressed the students and staff. The Ambassador then met with the Saskatchewan-Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee (SURAC), and toured the MD Ambulance company with former CEO Dave Dutchak, Ambulances for Ukraine.

The Ambassador and the UCC delegation were hosted by the University of Saskatchewan College of Arts and Science, where they discussed student exchange

programs between the University and Ukraine, academic and research exchanges, and the possibility of professors from the University of Saskatchewan teaching at Ukrainian universities with academics from several institutions of higher learning.

During a very full schedule in Saskatoon, Ambassador Shevchenko also had the opportunity to visit the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization; the Global Institute for Food Security; and meet with representatives of the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP).

In the evening the Ambassador and the UCC delegation took part in a Meet and Greet with the Saskatoon Ukrainian community, where UCC Executive Director Olya Grod provided an update about the work of UCC National and Ambassador Shevchenko provided an update on the reform process in Ukraine and answered questions from the assembled guests.

"This tour provided an opportunity to visit UCC Branches and to meet and discuss important issues," stated Olya Grod. "We had many interesting discussions and I am taking back numerous ideas and suggestions to the UCC National Board of Directors."

On Saturday morning UCC National President Paul Grod joined (via Skype) a meeting with the UCC Saskatchewan Provincial Council Board of Directors, which included UCC representatives from Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Canora, Prince Albert and Weyburn. Ambassador Shevchenko discussed the current state of Canada-Ukraine relations and opportunities for cooperation in the future.

"This visit was a wonderful opportunity for me to experience Ukrainian life and culture in Saskatchewan. I thank the community for the warm welcome and a very moving experience," stated Ambassador Shevchenko. "We had a great brainstorming session with representatives of the Government of Saskatchewan on how to get the most out of Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations, and I had an extraordinary chance to explore business and academic opportunities in the province. I am very much looking forward to further cooperation and to participating in the XXV Triennial Congress of Ukrainian Canadians, being held in Regina this fall."

"We were honoured to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the UCC by Ambassador Shevchenko and representatives of UCC National," stated MaryAnn Trischuk. "It was extremely important for the UCC Saskatchewan Provincial Council Board of Directors to have the opportunity to meet with the Ambassador and UCC National representatives, as it gave us an opportunity for a discussion platform on specific items and to clarify some areas of concern. This visit was also an opportunity to create awareness about the work being done on the national level on behalf of Ukrainians in Canada, and to strengthen ties with local branches and communities across our province."

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AFFILIATIONS

1. Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko
2. Canada-Ukraine Foundation
3. Canadian Ethnocultural Council
4. Ukrainian World Congress

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