

PRESS RELEASE

CUPP-2017 INTERNS ATTEND INVICTUS GAME TRIBUTE

■ The 2017 Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program began in September, with the arrival of 14 university students from Ukraine. We came prepared to serve an internship in the offices of Canadian Members of Parliament, celebrate Ukrainian Day on Parliament Hill, Prayer for Peace in Ukraine, and meet Canada's government officials and parliamentarians. On arrival we were happy to learn that we would also participate in celebrations of Canada's 150th birthday, the Invictus Games and the Terry Fox Run to defeat cancer.

The Invictus Games, an international sports competition for wounded, injured and ill soldiers was taking place in Toronto and Ukraine was sending a team for the first time.

The Toronto Invictus Games, under the patronage of Prince Henry of Wales, popularly known as Prince Harry, brought together more than 550 wounded soldiers, men and women from 17 countries that competed in 12 adaptive sports disciplines.

It was the first time ever that Team Ukraine, represented by 15 ATO veterans, was participating in the Invictus Games. The Ukrainian warrior-athletes participated in six events: athletics; power lifting; swimming; archery;

cycling and indoor rowing.

To honour Ukraine's Invictus Team, on September 22, the Ukrainian community of Toronto held an Invictus Games Tribute prior to the official opening ceremony of the Invictus Games. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko and First Lady Maryna Poroshenko attended the tribute. Over 500 guests attended the event, including Cabinet Ministers Harjit Sajjan, Canada's Minister of National Defence; Seamus O'Regan, Canada's Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence; Pavlo Klimkin, Ukraine's Minister of Foreign Affairs; Arsen Avakov, Ukraine's Minister of Internal Affairs; His Excellency Roman Waschuk, Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine; His Excellency Andriy Shevchenko, Ukraine's Ambassador to Canada, several Members of Canada's Parliament and representatives of the Ukrainian community.

The guests were treated to a performance and art installation by Balaklava Blues, which combined traditional Ukrainian folk songs and symbols with modern rhythms and imagery in tribute to Ukraine's Invictus warrior-athletes.

"These service people represent the essence of the courageous spirit of the Ukrainian army. They are real fighters. The story of each of them is an example of incredible will and determination," said Petro Poroshenko about the Ukrainian team. President Poroshenko addressed Prime Minister Trudeau and representatives of Canadian government in French, expressing his gratitude for Canada's support of Ukraine.

In turn, Prime Minister Trudeau paid a tribute to the Ukrainian soldiers: "The servicemen and women stay in the most dangerous places on the earth, fighting for the values and principles we hold sacred: peace, democracy, equality, justice and freedom—the same principles that Canadians and Ukrainians defend in Eastern Ukraine. We must not forget about the debt of gratitude we owe to men and women who have served their country with courage."

The National President of the UCC Paul Grod stated that the determination of Ukraine's team is an embodiment of the resilience and bravery of warriors who serve today on the frontlines defending Ukraine's freedom from Russian aggression.

This festive event was the first big

experience for the CUPP-2017 interns who attended the celebration, only a week after landing in Canada and finally overcoming the unprecedented jetlag consequences. Thrilled with the incredible atmosphere of the event, CUPP interns discovered an entirely new world of the life of Canadian Ukrainians, shared their own impressions from the first week at the internship in Parliament with other participants and even managed to take a picture with President Poroshenko, both Ambassadors, and UCC President Paul Grod.

But the most precious experience was the opportunity to get to know the Ukrainian soldiers whose spirit is stronger than their body. Returning from Toronto, Ukraine's national team brought back 14 medals. We hope that someday soon the Invictus Games will be hosted in Ukraine, since our warriors definitely have a story to tell the world and Ukraine is ready to host the Invictus Games.

—Christina Parandii,
CUPP Intern to James Bezan,
MP for Selkirk-Interlake
-Eastman, Manitoba



CUPP-2017 interns meet the Team Ukraine at the Ukrainian Invictus Gala Reception, September 22, 20.

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