

# Response to Canada's first national internment operations



## Background Briefs

Historic injustices and redress in Canada

### The movement for redress and early government responses

Beginning in 1985, Canada's Ukrainian community sought official acknowledgement (recognition) and redress (to make up for past wrongs) for Canada's first national internment operations from 1914-1920. This led to the development of a campaign that focused on the government's moral, legal and political duty to redress the historical wrong. Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, a leading member of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association stated:

Yet the community's campaign for acknowledgement and redress has not, unlike that of our fellow Japanese Canadians, achieved all of its goals, despite ten years of effort. In large measure this is because those officials responsible for dealing with the Ukrainian-Canadian community's claims (and those of other communities which have brought forward redress issues) have quite



On 9 May 2008, the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, the Honourable Jason Kenney, MP, and the President of the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko, Andrew Hladyshevsky, Q.C. signed the endowment agreement on behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian community at Stanley Barracks, a former internee receiving station. The agreement was witnessed by Professor Lubomyr Luciuk, Chair, Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Paul Grod, LLB, President, Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

Photo from left to right: Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, Hon. Jason Kenney, Mr. Andrew Hladyshevsky Q.C. and Mr. Paul Grod.

Source: Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund

deliberately and systematically attempted to dismiss and delay any resolution of the Ukrainian-Canadian case. They have reacted only when community-based initiatives have forced their hand... or when, in the weeks just before the fall 1988 and fall 1993 federal elections, their political masters felt some need to placate [to make less angry or hostile] a Ukrainian-Canadian constituency numbering over one million people.

Otherwise the Ukrainian-Canadian redress issue has all but been ignored. Ottawa has used what might be referred to as a "wait and hope they go away" strategy, in no way different from the one earlier deployed against the NJAC [National Association of Japanese Canadians].

### Government recognition and the redress agreement

The efforts of those involved in the redress movement were realized on November 25, 2005, when Conservative Member of Parliament Inky Mark's Private Member's Bill C-331, *Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act*, was passed. While there was no official government apology, this act acknowledges that persons of Ukrainian origin were interned in Canada during World War I. Also, it legally required the government of Canada to take action to recognize the internment and provide funding for educational and commemorative (to remember and honour) projects.

On May 9, 2008, the Canadian government established a \$10 million fund. The Endowment

Council of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund uses the interest earned on that amount to fund projects that commemorate the experience of the thousands who were interned between 1914–20. The funds are used to support educational and cultural activities that keep alive the memory of those who suffered during Canada’s first national internment operations. The endowment fund is the result of 20 years of hard work by a small group of dedicated and determined members of the Ukrainian community. There were many stops and starts along the way, but these committed activists continued their struggle to right an historical injustice committed by the Canadian government.

### **Reactions to the apology and redress agreement**

After the House of Commons and Canadian Senate passed Bill C-331, *Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act*, spokespersons for the Ukrainian Canadian community stated,

This represents a good will gesture and a very important step in securing recognition and reconciliation (to restore good relations) for the wrongs done to Ukrainians and other Europeans during this country’s first national internment operations of 1914–1920, when thousands of men, women and children were needlessly imprisoned as “enemy aliens,” had their wealth confiscated, were forced to do heavy labour, disenfranchised and subjected to other State-sanctioned censures.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of those who endured the internment, Dr. Luciuk, then Director of Research, Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association said,

We did not break [lose] faith. A score of years ago our community began to recover the memory of what it had endured—a “national humiliation,” as an editorial writer described our disenfranchisement [loss of rights] in Canada’s oldest newspaper, Kingston’s *Daily British Whig*—one that sooner or later would have to be atoned [to repair or make up for] for. That time for atonement begins here, today, in Regina, with the first steps we now take forward together, having signed this agreement in principle that puts us on the path to securing an acknowledgement of an historic injustice, and so heralds [opens] the way toward reconciliation and a healing. And it does more, for it signals to all that, forever more, we are no longer “in fear of the barbed wire fence,” and never again will be.<sup>2</sup>

However, despite the progress, spokespersons for the Ukrainian Canadian Congress felt there was more to be done:

We look forward to the next step in the fall where we anticipate concluding a final agreement that will provide a proper acknowledgement and a series of commemorative, educational and community building initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Hladyshevsky, Paul Grod, and Lubomyr Luciuk, “Ukrainian Canadian leaders hail agreement.” *The Ukrainian Weekly*, No. 36. September 4, 2005, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Lubomyr Luciuk, *Without Just Cause: Canada’s First National Internment Operations and the Ukrainian Canadians, 1914–1920*. Kingston: Kashtan Press, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Hladyshevsky, Paul Grod, and Lubomyr Luciuk, “Ukrainian Canadian leaders hail agreement.” *The Ukrainian Weekly*, No 36. September 4, 2005, p. 4.



The following is a transcript of Bill C-331, *Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act*, assented to on November 25, 2005.

## ***Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act***

An Act to acknowledge that persons of Ukrainian origin were interned in Canada during the First World War and to provide for recognition of this event

### **Preamble**

WHEREAS, during the First World War, persons of Ukrainian origin were interned in Canada under the authority of an Act of Parliament;

WHEREAS Parliament wishes to express its deep sorrow for those events;

AND WHEREAS Parliament acknowledges that those events are deserving of recognition through public education and the promotion of the shared values of multiculturalism, inclusion and mutual respect;

NOW, THEREFORE, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

- |                                     |     |  |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--|
| <b>Short title</b>                  | 1.  | This Act may be cited as the <i>Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act</i> .  |
| <b>Negotiations</b>                 | 2.  | The Government of Canada shall undertake negotiations with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko towards an agreement concerning measures that may be taken to recognize the internment of persons of Ukrainian origin in Canada during the First World War. |
| <b>Objective</b>                    | 2.1 | The measures shall have as their objective a better public understanding of<br>(a) the consequences of ethnic, religious or racial intolerance and discrimination; and<br>(b) the important role of the Canadian <i>Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> in the respect and promotion of the values it reflects and the rights and freedoms it guarantees.             |
| <b>Commemorative plaques</b>        | 2.2 | The measures may include the installation of commemorative plaques at certain places where persons of Ukrainian origin were interned in Canada during the First World War.   |
| <b>Public education measures</b>    | 3.  | The measures may also include the following public education measures:<br>(a) the exhibition of information concerning internment camps and the contribution made by persons of Ukrainian origin to the development of Canada; and<br>(b) the preparation of related educational materials.  |
| <b>Commemorative postage stamps</b> | 4.  | The Government of Canada and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko may request the Canada Post Corporation to issue a commemorative stamp or set of stamps.  |
| <b>Other commemorative measures</b> | 5.  | The Government of Canada and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko may consider any other measure that promotes the objective described in section 2.1.  |
| <b>Interpretation</b>               | 6.  | Negotiations undertaken pursuant to section 2 shall not be interpreted as constituting an admission by Her Majesty in right of Canada of the existence of any legal obligation of Her Majesty in right of Canada to any person.  |

