



As a leading voice in the Ukrainian Canadian community, the Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union (SUSK) adopts the following positions with respect to key policy issues relating to both Ukraine and Canada:

### **Democracy, Territorial Integrity, and Peace for Ukraine**

The history of the Ukrainian people is the story of a struggle for independence. In the recent past, this has been exemplified through several revolutions, including the “Revolution on Granite”, the “Orange Revolution”, and the “Maidan Revolution of Dignity”. In each of these revolutions, Ukrainian citizens have demonstrated their desire to live freely, rejecting subjugation by foreign powers, oligarchic clans, and corrupt dictators. Despite nearly a quarter-century of independence, Ukraine continues this struggle.

In the wake of the Maidan revolution, Vladimir Putin has repeatedly utilized state-sponsored terrorism and methods of covert hybrid warfare to destabilize Ukraine, both in Crimea and in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Donetsk. His rhetoric of Ukraine as a part of Russia, rather than a sovereign country, insults and humiliates Ukrainians worldwide. SUSK holds firmly to the belief that Ukraine is an independent, sovereign nation state. SUSK calls upon the Russian Federation to honour its duties as a signatory of the Budapest Memorandum, an international legal instrument which guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity, by withdrawing all troops from the sovereign territory of Ukraine and respecting Ukrainian independence.

SUSK acknowledges and is closely following the various efforts for reform by the administration of President Petro Poroshenko. The Ukrainian people have consistently demonstrated their commitment to democracy during and tumultuous times. In order to promote democratic development in Ukraine, SUSK calls upon the Ukrainian government to strengthen its judiciary system, support Ukrainian civil society, safeguard freedom of expression and the press, and continue implementing reforms related to the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. In addition, we ask the current Canadian government to continue to support Ukraine in its efforts to achieve peace and stability in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories.

The illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the invasion of Eastern Ukraine by the Russian Federation has led to numerous human rights violations. Ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, and Crimean Tatars refusing to give up Ukrainian citizenship have been subjected to jailing, beatings, threats, and property seizures. SUSK calls upon the international community to monitor and condemn these human rights violations. SUSK also encourages the Ukrainian government to enhance supports for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) both from Crimea and the Donbass and Luhansk territories.

### **Unjust Detainment of Ukrainians by Russia**

SUSK condemns the abduction and illegal detention of Ukrainian citizens by the Russian Federation. The list includes but is not limited to: Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, Alexander



Kolchenko, Yuri Yatsenko, Bogdan Yarichevsky, Mykola Karpyuk, Stanislav Klykh, Sergiy Lytvinov, Valentyn Vyhivsky, Yuriy Soloshenko, Oleksandr Kostenko, as well as those Ukrainians being held in occupied Crimea.

The right of several of these detainees to a fair and just trial has not been respected. For instance, the Russian authorities have not upheld a just and transparent process following their abduction of Nadiya Savchenko from Ukraine in 2014. As a result, Western politicians and intellectuals have called for Savchenko's release following her abduction and unjust trial, where her fate was determined long before the trial even began. SUSK does not condone or accept the verdict of this "kangaroo court", where the presumption of innocence and the very nature of justice has been subverted by corruption.

Similarly, Stanislav Klykh and Mykola Karpyuk have been the subjects of a show trial in Chechnya, the legitimacy of which has been questioned by the Memorial Centre, a reputable human rights group. In addition to ignoring crucial evidence, there have been reports that Russian authorities have subjected Klykh to severe abuse, including electrocutions, beatings, and administration of psychotropic substances.

The cases of Nadiya Savchenko, Stanislav Klykh, Mykola Karpyuk and other unjustly detained Ukrainians highlight Russia's blatant disregard for international law and human rights. Despite international condemnation of Russia's actions and calls to release the above-mentioned Ukrainian citizens, Russia continues to violate the Minsk agreement by detaining and illegally prosecuting these individuals. SUSK firmly believes that the Canadian government can take a more active role in advocating for these victims of injustice. We pride ourselves on being a nation that upholds the values of a free and just society. We should work together to ensure that the very principles that guide our daily lives and our justice system aid in the release and exoneration of these individuals. SUSK hopes that the Canadian government will continue its efforts to combat such injustices by helping facilitate the release of all abducted and illegally detained/imprisoned Ukrainian citizens by the Russian Federation.

### **Aid for Ukraine**

The Ukrainian people are currently plagued by the horrors and devastations brought by war. Since the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine in fall 2014, thousands of men, women, and children have been injured and killed in the ongoing conflict. SUSK would like to recognize the efforts of many Canadians who have contributed to various forms of assistance and aid for Ukraine in the recent months. Of particular note are the Canadian healthcare professionals who have lent their expertise to help many victims of war. The latest medical mission organized by the Canada Ukraine Foundation and Operation Rainbow Canada helped change the lives of many patients with varying degrees of injuries. We applaud the commitment of the Canadian government for generously contributing \$1.2 million to establish and upgrade health care infrastructure in the Ukrainian military. Since the beginning of the medical mission program 183 surgical procedures have been performed on 97 patients, and many more have been helped through consultations with our great Canadian doctors. The need for medical assistance in



Ukraine is ongoing, and SUSK hopes that the Canadian government and the general public continues to provide assistance to the Ukrainian people ravaged by war.

### **Ukraine's Integration into the EU and NATO**

Ukraine holds strategic geopolitical significance in Europe, straddling the border between Eastern and Western Europe. SUSK believes that Ukraine's long-term prosperity and security depend on its ability to expand its economic, military, and political ties beyond its long-standing traditional linkage with Russia. A commitment to these values was demonstrated by millions of Ukrainians during the Revolution of Dignity. Consequently, Ukraine is in the process of exiting the Commonwealth of Independent States, and has ratified an Association Agreement with the European Union.

SUSK notes, with approval, the initiative taken by both Ukraine and Canada in securing the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA), representing a milestone in Ukrainian Canadian bilateral relations. Forming further partnerships and trade agreements with other countries worldwide will help to spur Ukraine's economic growth and act as a catalyst for much-needed democratic and state reforms. Ukraine's integration into the international family of democratic nations would be further enhanced by Ukraine's induction into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). SUSK will continue, in concert with our Ukrainian Canadian partners, to advocate for such outcomes. We hope that we have the unrelenting support of our Canadian government, as we know it is a great advocate for the people of Ukraine on the world stage.

### **Canada's Diplomatic Relations with Ukraine**

Over the last year, Canada has advanced its historic relationship with the nascent Ukrainian state which came into independence in 1991. The Canadian government has extended significant support and has been forthright in promoting the democratic process in Ukraine. Canadian diplomatic missions, parliamentary hearings, and government calls to action have all greatly helped bring issues affecting Ukraine to the forefront of Canadian foreign policy. Canada's stalwart support has garnered Ukraine its due international attention and has helped mobilize the international community to assist and support Ukraine during its territorial crisis and present ongoing war. The government of Canada's efforts, particularly its training of Ukrainian military personnel and new police forces, is notable. SUSK commends the Canadian government for its leadership in assisting Ukraine during this difficult time, and is proud to call itself, first and foremost, a Canadian organization. SUSK will continue to do all it can to ensure such a relationship persists for years to come.

### **125th Anniversary of Ukrainian Immigration to Canada**

In 2016, Ukrainian Canadians will celebrate the 125th Anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. Beginning in 1891, early Ukrainians came to Canada in search of a better life for their families, and effectively blazed the trail for hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians across five



waves of immigration, each of which contributed to the essential fabric of Canadian life and culture. Through these five waves of immigration, Ukrainians have settled in a land of refuge and freedom. The Ukrainian experience in Canada serves as an example of the opportunities and possibilities that Canada represents. Over the last 125 years, Ukrainians have maintained their language, traditions and culture, while also participating in and contributing to Canadian community life. Presently, there are over 1.3 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent, all of whom are looking forward to the commemorations planned for the upcoming year. For instance, the province of Saskatchewan has proclaimed 2016 as the year of Saskatchewan Ukrainians. SUSK recognizes the significance of the 125th Anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada and encourages its members to collaborate with local Ukrainian organizations across the country in celebrating this crucial milestone.

### **Spirit Lake Internee Cemetery**

SUSK recognizes the importance of preserving the Spirit Lake Internee Cemetery as an important symbol of Ukrainian Canadian history and a crucial sign of respect to Ukrainian Canadian families whose ancestors were forcefully detained at the site during the First World War. The Spirit Lake Internment Camp, Canada's second largest internment site, existed between 1915 and 1917 in the province of Québec and served as a confinement and imprisonment location of over 1200 Ukrainian people classified as "enemy aliens." Ethnic Ukrainians from Austria-Hungary were most susceptible to such description and were unjustly confined and interned at the camp. Canada's past actions cannot be corrected; however, SUSK urges the Canadian government and specifically the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Mélanie Joly, to protect the Spirit Lake Internee Cemetery, and commit to allocating funds to restore the cemetery, as its condition has deteriorated over time. This sacred space should be restored and protected, in order to allow Canadians to remember and respect those who died at Spirit Lake. Such an effort would complement other initiatives that aim to commemorate this dark chapter in Canadian history, such as the Camp Spirit Lake Interpretive Centre and the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund. Alongside the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, SUSK encourages the Canadian government to address the deteriorating condition of the Spirit Lake Internee Cemetery.

### **Holodomor Awareness**

The Holodomor genocide of 1932-1933, imposed on the Ukrainian people by Stalin's regime, was one of the worst tragedies to befall the Ukrainian people. Despite considerable documentation and international acknowledgement, unfounded criticisms and denials of this tragedy persist, both in Ukraine and around the world. SUSK is proud of the steps that have been taken by the Canadian government to recognize and commemorate this horrible tragedy orchestrated to destroy and silence the voice of a proud and resilient nation. This year, we celebrate the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the national Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial day. We also applaud the efforts of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) for their support in raising awareness of this dark chapter of our history by incorporating pieces and exhibits depicting the Holodomor as a human rights issue in their museum galleries.



We continue to commemorate the victims of the Holodomor and ensure their eternal memory by raising awareness of this tragedy on university campuses across Canada. In addition, we acknowledge the efforts by Canadian filmmakers for producing “Bitter Harvest” - a film to be released this year, which will undoubtedly help our efforts. SUSK remains committed to raising awareness, remembering the deceased, and educating the generations that live on today about the Holodomor.

### **Ukrainian Studies in Canada and Canadians Studying in Ukraine**

SUSK recognizes the need to uphold and promote the study of Ukrainian language and culture in Canada. Scholarship in these areas is a primary channel through which Ukrainian heritage and culture can be passed on from one generation to the next. The year 2016 marks the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada, and SUSK is committed to ensuring that the study of Ukrainian language and culture in Canada continues for generations to come.

SUSK is also fully committed to the ongoing promotion and growth of Ukrainian studies in Canada. We strongly encourage students to become involved in Ukrainian studies, including: Ukrainian language lessons, Ukrainian history classes, Ukrainian folklore readings, etc. SUSK will continue to support and encourage students to enroll in programs across Canada in all aspects of Ukrainian studies. In addition, we encourage everyone to make use of books, articles, and other resources relating to Ukrainian topics in universities as well as public libraries.

In many universities across Canada, students have the opportunity to study in a number of countries abroad. SUSK encourages students to take part in exchange or study abroad programs offering opportunities to study in Ukraine. It is beneficial for Ukrainian Canadian students to understand what modern day life in Ukraine is like, to meet and network with the people of Ukraine, and to continue to grow and maintain the Ukrainian language, culture, and traditions.

### **Ukrainian Youth - SUSK/SUSN/SUSTA/SKUMO**

SUSK recognizes that young people are the power and the future of every nation. As a student organization in the Ukrainian diaspora, SUSK strives to unite Ukrainian youth in Canada and give them a voice. To further this commitment, SUSK actively seeks to forge lasting relationships with youth/student organizations in Ukraine and the diaspora, including the Federation of Ukrainian Student Organizations of America (SUSTA), the Bund Ukrainischer Studenten in Deutschland (SUSN), the Ukrainian Association of Students' Self-Government (UASS; Ukraine), as well as the member organizations of the World Congress of Ukrainian Youth Organizations (SKUMO). SUSK believes in strengthening international ties and in empowering Ukrainian youth from around the world.

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