

# INFORMATION: THE CURRENCY OF DEMOCRACY

COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING WORKSHOPS IN LVIV, EDMONTON

by Terry Lewycky

It has been said that information is the currency of democracy. Just as the free-flow of a monetary currency fuels economic activity, it is the free-flow or passing of information between the public and the government that fuels democratic activity.

In September the West Ukrainian Resource Centre (WURC) for non-government organizations held its first "NGO Public Communication Training Workshop" in the Karpatia Hotel in Lviv to explore new opportunities for fuelling public information and discussion in Ukrainian society.

The workshop, sponsored by the Partners in Civil Society Program, was delivered by InfoPak Communications of Winnipeg. It was designed to acquaint Resource Centre staff, NGO members and advocacy organization volunteers with the various elements of public awareness needed to effectively communicate with governments, other organizations, benefactors and the general public. Among the participants were the International Renaissance Foundation, Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Plast Ukraine, Economics and Politics Regional Foundation, Law for Ukraine Foundation, Lion Society, Regional Centre for Ecological Cooperation, Ukraine-Europe Regional Foundation and Counterpart Foundation.

## Lviv Workshop Goals and Objectives

Each of the four days of the workshop was presented as a distinct module. The sessions addressed such topics as information requirements, available media resources, network communication strategies and specific techniques for partnership building, public awareness, fundraising, government advocacy and public policy lobbying. The workshop also provided Centre members with basic communication skill training in writing, design and production, as well as a teaching guide needed to pass that knowledge on to others involved in social advocacy issues.

Workshop exercises focused on developing partnership strategies for such hypothetical issues as a public awareness campaign to encourage volunteer support in organizations; small business lobbying for improved taxation and reduced regulation; an anti-drinking and alcohol abuse campaign focused at teenagers; an AIDS and STD public awareness campaign; and an advocacy initiative to lobby government for tax benefits for benefactors and funding supporters.

The workshop provided volunteer personnel with an appreciation of various audiences, an understanding of the communications process and the use of communication planning



techniques, tools and resources. It assisted the Centre in developing its internal capacity to plan, manage and implement public communication activities, as well as providing the capability and training resources needed to prepare other NGO's in effective communications.

Final copies of the NGO Communications Training Manual and Public Relations Guide are available at both the Canada-Ukraine Partnership Program (CUPP) Office in Kyiv and in the resource library of the WURC in Lviv. Other NGOs and community organizations are encouraged to use the Guide, either independently or as a training resource, in preparing their own staff and volunteers for improved dialogue with government and the public.

## Followup Visit to Grant McEwan

Last November, representatives of the WURC and a similar agency from Eastern Ukraine, the Kharkiv Centre for Gender Studies, were in Edmonton to attend a training seminar on planning, fundraising and volunteer management. The program was offered by Grant

MacEwan Community College's Voluntary Sector Management Program. The delegates also participated in a workshop on community-building hosted by the college's Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre (URDC) and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC). Both organizations from Ukraine want to develop into fully-operational umbrella NGO's providing support services to various other non-government organizations in Ukraine.

*A total of five Ukrainian non-government organizations (NGOs) are participating in this CIDA-funded program designed to strengthen Ukraine's non-profit and voluntary sectors: Western Ukraine Resource Centre, Kharkiv Centre for Gender Studies, Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Lviv Board of Education, and Plast Ukraine.*

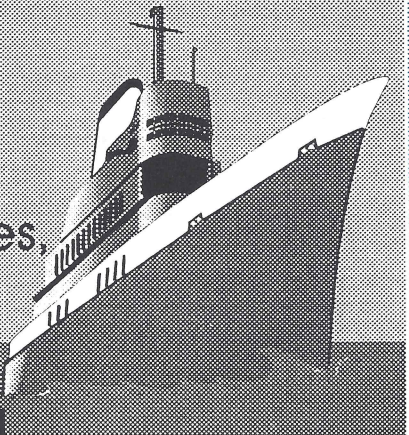
*For additional information:  
Tony Berezowecki  
Program Manager, Civil Society Program  
CBIE, 220 Laurier Avenue W., Suite 1100  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P 5Z9  
Tel. 613-237-4820, Ext. 257*



**V.I.M. Parcel Express Inc.**  
**PYSANKA**

2100 Bloor St. West, Suite 6A, Toronto, ON, Canada M6S 4Y7  
Tel: (416) 604-8311 Fax: (416) 604-1422

GUARANTEED WEEKLY DIRECT  
OCEAN & AIR CARGO  
REGULAR  
LCL/FCL to:  
Ukraine,  
Belarus,  
Baltic States,  
Russia\*



\*Certain Restrictions Apply