

VISIT OF THE MAYOR OF WINDSOR TO LUBLIN

The current year, 2015, is an unusual one in Canada-Poland relations. Poland twice hosted the Prime Minister and the Governor General of Canada. It is noteworthy that in the Canadian delegations, there were not only representatives of the diplomatic corps, Members of Parliament, business people, Polonia and media, but also Polonia youth.



Drew Dilkens and Alex Bugailiskis in front of Lublin City Hall and plaques showing partner cities.

In Poland, the year 2015 is the year of local councils. These are very important, because they determine the standard of living guaranteed to inhabitants of the cities and villages. The twinning of cities is an interesting initiative for the building of bridges between local councils through cooperation. Lublin in Poland and Windsor in Canada have been two such cities for the past 16 years. Lublin presently has 24 twin cities (including several in Ukraine), whereas the smaller Windsor has only 12. Recently, a very important initiative of an international nature on the part of Lublin has been to unite its twin cities for the purpose of carrying out clearly defined joint projects.



Meeting with the Rotary Club, the “Old City”.

From 19-21 July, Drew Dilkens, the Mayor of Windsor, and Jerzy Barycki, President of the Polish-Canadian Business and Professional Association of Windsor, took part in an official visit to Lublin. The Association is now in existence for 20 years and thanks to its initiative, the twinning agreement was signed 15 years ago.

For a decade and a half, there have been numerous visits in both directions - official, business and educational – but particularly memorable is the visit by a delegation from Lublin, on the occasion of one hundred years of the Polish community in Windsor. It was then that the citizens of Windsor received from Lublin the Goat Fountain, a beautiful sculpture in bronze, which to this day is a distinguished ambassador of Lublin. It is located at a picturesque site along the Detroit River, a favourite place for the citizens of Windsor to take walks. The Goat Fountain, the original of which is in Lublin, not far from City Hall, is one of a number of attractions; in places, it is polished, where it was touched by the hands of thirsty passers-by.



Meeting with the Mayor of Lublin.



Left to right: D. Dilkens, K. Żuk, A. Bugailiskis, J. Barycki.

The current visit included official meetings with the City Council of Lublin, led by Krzysztof Żuk, the Mayor of Lublin, and numerous working meetings. There was a lunch with representatives of the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), with which the University of Windsor has a signed collaborative agreement. The meeting was facilitated by the creation of the joint project of the previous year, the exhibition, *John Paul II, Poland's Gift to the World*. The exhibition was the work of KUL sponsored and promoted by the Polish-Canadian Business and Professional Association of Windsor. There were discussions about the present and future activities of the Lublin Business Club, comprising about 200 companies as well as with the very active Rotary Club, the "Old City".

A special guest participating in these meetings was Ms. Alexandra Bugailiskis, the Ambassador of Canada to Poland, who was there with her husband. This lent a distinctive character to the meetings, since Canada is waiting to sign an agreement with the European Union. The prospect of this is good for both Poland and Canada, but also for Lublin. It will help to eliminate trade barriers, which at present hinder the growth of cooperation. The waiver of visas to Canada in 2008 and the eventual agreement with the EU are remarkably important pillars of future cooperation with Poland that will lead to an expansion of the labour market and the elevation of living standard on both sides of the Atlantic. The first day of the visit was brought to an end with a meaningful conversation involving Krzysztof Komorski, the Deputy Mayor of Lublin, and Grzegorz Siemiński, the former Deputy Mayor of Lublin, who visited Canada in 2013.

In Lublin, there are many construction sites that are new investments, but this is still not enough for the council of this most student-oriented city in Poland. The city authorities want to create more places of work, so that young people can find a new perspective on life in the city, where they were educated and beautiful, centuries-old Lublin, linking the cultures of East and West, could become their home.

The delegation visited the beautifully designed and already operational Lublin Arena, with a capacity of 15,000 spectators. As well, still under construction, Aqua Lublin caught attention as a swimming pool for the 21st century. It is a 105-million-złoty investment with an Olympic-size pool and many technological wonders: movable walls, a raised bottom, and 2,100 seats for the spectators. It is the largest of its kind in Poland and also has glass walls for observation of the swimmers from outside the pool, a true technological work of art.



Visit to Aqua Lublin.



Visit to the Lublin Arena.



Visit to Aliplast.

The delegation also visited Aliplast, a most modern factory for the manufacture of aluminium mouldings at specified sizes and colours and most importantly supplying them in record time to the customer. It is undeniably “state of the art”. Not surprisingly, to meet rising demand the factory is growing, already employing more than 300 people.



Visit to "Perła" Brewery.

This all could not have taken place without a visit to "Perła" ("Pearl"), the brewery of the famous Lublin beer, which is expanding continually to keep up with the increasing demand for the popular beverage. It was a pleasant surprise to learn that the owner of the firm is a Canadian. This is a good example of the creation of a good business with an international perspective. If only this beer would reach Canada, perhaps even Windsor, just as from not so long ago the famous Windsor whiskey Canadian Club can be purchased in Lublin.



Close of the Visit to Lublin.

During the discussions, the Mayor of Lublin received a formal invitation to visit Windsor in October for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Association and the 15th anniversary of the twinning agreement. The invitation was accepted.

It is worth noting the interest of the media, namely TV Polonia, in this event, which reflects the special significance of this most recent visit by the delegation from Windsor and the Canadian Ambassador to the partner city of Lublin. Special recognition should go to the organizers, the staff of the City Office of Lublin, for the attractive programme and the planning of the visit.

In conclusion, it is necessary to add that in two years, in 2017, Lublin will celebrate its 700th anniversary and Windsor its 125 years of existence; it also will be 150 years since the birth of Canada. Maybe this will be the next occasion for opening up the great potential for collaboration and for showing the inhabitants of the twin cities that the local councils also can take action on an international scale for the benefit of the two regions in Poland and Canada.

Jerzy Barycki

Translated by Frank Simpson

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