



news release

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CANADA TO ASSIST UKRAINIAN ELECTIONS

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today announced a technical assistance package to help Ukraine organize and conduct its first democratic parliamentary elections, March 27. The \$2.5-million Canadian initiative is the largest and most comprehensive among international donors.

"These first-ever multiparty elections in Ukraine are of particular interest to Canada since so many Canadians have family and historical ties to the region. We welcome this clear move toward a democratic, pluralist political system and we are committed to helping Ukrainians ensure that this vote is conducted fairly and openly," Mr. Ouellet said.

In response to a Ukrainian request, Canada is supplying 445 tonnes of specialized paper with security features, which will be used to print ballots in Ukraine. An Antonov aircraft will arrive today at Montreal's Mirabel Airport to take delivery of the third and last shipment of Canadian paper. Canada is also working closely with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) in Ukraine, providing technical support, training and a team of election observers. A Canadian elections expert is currently in Kiev to advise the CEC over a three-month period.

One problem facing Ukrainian election organizers is the electorate's lack of experience with multiparty elections. Canada will help finance the printing and distribution of the new elections law, as well as a citizen's guide to the law and a guide to campaign organization. Representatives from Elections Canada will train members of the Central Electoral Commission on the importance of public participation and getting out the vote.