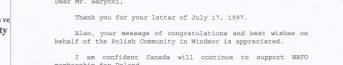
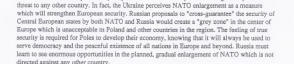
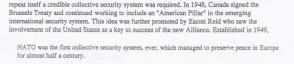
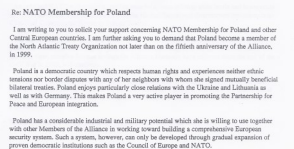
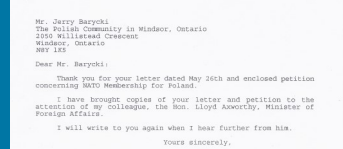
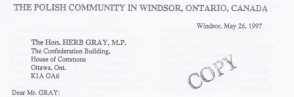
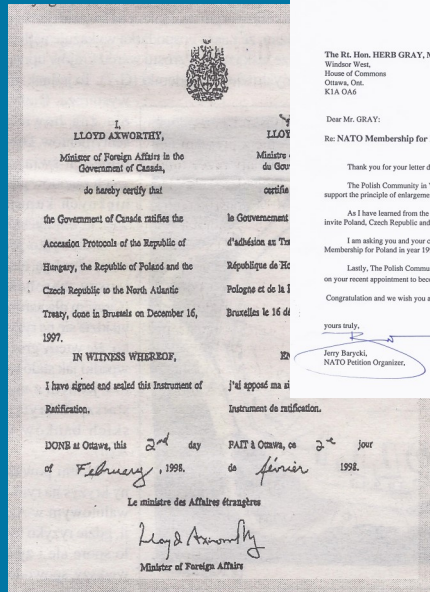


6.3 Support for Poland in NATO

The petition from the Polish Community in Windsor with almost 500 signatures was sent to Hon. Herb Gray, M.P. for Windsor West, who facilitated our request.

Poland joined NATO in 1999. Canada was the first country to offer support.



6.4 Lifting Visas for Poland

Mister Prime Minister, please abolish visas for Poland!

These words were heard ten years ago at a press conference, called on January 11, 2008, at the Dom Polski in Windsor by federal Members of Parliament Brian Masse and Joe Comartin, with the participation of the local Polish community.



Member of Parliament Brian Masse speaking at the press conference in the Dom Polski, Windsor (2008).

Success came on March 1, 2008, at the John Paul II Cultural Centre in Mississauga, where in the presence of about 1,000 Polonia participants the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Diane Finley, announced the abolition of visas for Poland and at the same time for Lithuania, Hungary and Slovakia. Among those present were several ministers and a large group of federal representatives, led by the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity, Jason Kenney, the chief strategist of the programme to abolish the visas. The members of Polonia present showed their gratitude to the Canadian Government with standing ovations and the singing of the traditional "May He/She Live A Hundred Years".



Participants at the meeting in the John Paul II Centre, Mississauga.



Left: Minister Diane Finley, after the announcement of the abolition of visas, John Paul II Centre, Mississauga.

Right: Group of VIPs in the John Paul II Centre, Mississauga.



With a single political decision, all barriers to the abolition of visas for Poland suddenly vanished. Poland not only became a part of NATO and the EU, but also a full partner of Canada with equal rights. From that time, Polish business people, students, tourists and Polonia families do not have to stand in long lines for visas at the entrance to the Embassy in Warszawa, or experience humiliation and financial losses as a result of being refused a visa. It is true that there were fears on the part of Canada that the citizens of Poland would flood the employment market of the Land of the Maple Leaf. However, today, after ten years, we do not see thousands of our fellow citizens looking for work in Canada. These fears did not materialize. The European employment market is decidedly more attractive for our fellow citizens than distant Canada. It is noteworthy that, for example, in Windsor currently there is a shortage of qualified workers. Nowadays, there are meetings with business people who eagerly employ workers of Polish origin from Poland or Europe. It is surprising that this has come about in connection with immigration needs.

On the occasion of this tenth anniversary, it is worth remembering that the process of abolition of visas for Poland began much earlier. Numerous appeals by MP Borys Wrzesniewskyj in the Canadian Parliament regarding the abolition of visas for EU nations already had taken place in the year 2005. The following year saw the start of working sessions involving the President of the CPC Head Council, Władysław Lizon, the Vice President for Polish Affairs, Jerzy Barycki; the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, Piotr Ogrodzinski; the Consul of the Republic of Poland for Polish Community Affairs and Promotion in Toronto, Andrzej Kręgel; representatives in the Canada-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group; as well as former federal Member of Parliament, Jesse Flis, who prepared the strategy for the petitions of the representatives. Polonia organizations across the entire nation later benefited from it. Of course, there also were other individuals and organizations supporting the abolition of visas. It is important to emphasize that a united front was created for actions by Polonia, Poland and representatives of each of the parties.

Jerzy Barycki, President,
Polish-Canadian Business and Professional
Association of Windsor
Windsor, February 21, 2018. FINAL

Translated by Frank Simpson,
University of Windsor
Windsor, February 23, 2018

The Polish Community in Windsor worked very hard with local MPs to eliminate visas for Poland. Lifting visas for Poland was announced in Mississauga on March 1, 2008.