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38th Parliament

## JOHN YAKABUSKI, M.P.P. - RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

Member's Statement

May 3, 2005

### Polish Kashub Celebration

Mr. Speaker,

It gives me great pleasure to rise today on the occasion of the Annual Commemoration of Poland's May 3rd, 1791 Constitution, which was the first in Europe and second in the world.

To the Poles and their descendents, May 3<sup>rd</sup> is a national holiday, for it bestows upon them a priceless heritage of humanitarianism, tolerance and freedom conceived at a time when most of Europe lived under the existence of unconditional power and tyranny.

The tyranny deemed the Polish constitution too dangerous and Poland lost its independence, its territories annexed by Austria, Russia and Prussia. In terms of a national life, Poland lost the entire 19<sup>th</sup> Century, being reborn in 1918.

In the mid 1800s, the ancestors of my father, Paul Yakabuski, immigrated to Canada from the Kashub area of Poland. In 1963 he became the first person of Polish descent to be elected to the Ontario Legislature.

Barry's Bay also became home to the famous Polish-Canadian test pilot, Janusz Zurakowski. He passed away last year, but not before a monument and a park in the middle of Barry's Bay was dedicated in his honour.

This is a week of special celebration for those of us who are of Polish descent. At noon today I attended the flag-raising ceremony by the Polish Canadian Congress and on Saturday, May 7th, I am looking forward to joining the Wilno Heritage Society in celebrating friendship, fellowship and freedom from Communist rule, as well as recognizing the tremendous impact the Polish Kashub culture has had and the contribution it has made to our community, Ontario and Canada.