

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Evelin Ilves, who are on a state visit to Canada, met with the local Estonian community in the Estonian House, Toronto.

"Let us not classify Estonians into native and alien Estonians. We are all Estonians, no matter where we live. And even if we live far away from Estonia, everyone always has the chance to come to Estonia," told President Ilves in front of a full house in the Estonian House, Toronto.

He encouraged everyone to use the chance to invite Estonians from all over Estonia to participate in shaping the life of Estonia, from its economy and culture to politics.

In answering a question posed by seven-year-old Laas Kolga on whether the Head of State would recommend him to continue his studies in Estonia, when he can speak Estonia, English and French – President Ilves responded: "Every talented young person can come to Estonian universities. Anyone who speaks three different languages will definitely be a success." "This is how I also feel," Laas Kolga said.

President Ilves recalled that both Estonian and Canadian soldiers have served in the NATO operation in Afghanistan – in the most difficult place, the southern part of the country – and both have suffered major losses. The Head of State invited Canadian Estonians to support the children of defence force members who have either been killed or seriously wounded in foreign operations by contributing to the Carolin Illenzeer Foundation.

President Ilves and Evelin Ilves also met with the biggest donors of the Estonian Central Council in Canada and the Estonian Foundation in Canada. The presidential couple was given woollen blankets in Hudson Bay colours, a bow tie decorated with maple leaves and an ice hockey jersey of Canadian Estonians.

Today, President Ilves will participate in a "Let's Do It" 2013 event at Jõekääru Youth Camp, which Toomas Hendrik Ilves himself attended several times as a child.

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