



Ted Opitz

Member of Parliament
Etobicoke Centre



Conservative MP Ted Opitz supports the Ukrainian-Canadian community's call for democracy in Ukraine

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TORONTO- Speaking at a rally held in front of the Ukrainian Consulate General in Toronto earlier this week, Etobicoke-Centre Member of Parliament, Ted Opitz, joined hundreds of Ukrainian-Canadians who gathered to protest the recent arrest of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko in Ukraine. Mr. Opitz thanked Walter Derzko, the organizer, for the opportunity to speak. The rally was attended by representatives of many Ukrainian-Canadian non-governmental organizations.

Mr. Opitz told the crowd that he was proud that Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs John Baird had taken swift action to issue an official statement expressing Canada's serious concern over the apparently politically-motivated arrest of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, the leader of Ukraine's opposition.

In a statement issued on August 6, Canada's Foreign Minister John Baird was unequivocal in his condemnation: "Canada is concerned by the apparently politically motivated persecution, and now arrest, of Yulia Tymoshenko. The appearance of political bias in judicial proceedings undermines the rule of law. Canada urges the Ukrainian government to strengthen judiciary independence and continues to support efforts to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous society in Ukraine," said Minister John Baird.

In his remarks, Ted Opitz underscored Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's clear stance on the question of democracy and human rights in Ukraine. According to Mr. Opitz: "The Prime Minister set the tone for Canada-Ukraine relations in his historic speech in Lviv, when he stated that "the cornerstone of Canada's foreign policy is the promotion of such values: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and all the institutions that come with them: property rights, an impartial judiciary, and above all, freedom of expression and a free press."

Mr. Opitz played an integral role in organizing Prime Minister Stephen Harper's historic trip to Ukraine this past October, during which time the Canadian Prime Minister made clear that Canada-Ukraine bilateral relations would be shaped by latter's adherence to such principles as the rule of law and an impartial judiciary.

The concerns raised by the Canadian Government over the arrest of Tymoshenko have been expressed by other countries, including the United States, Germany, France, Britain, and the European Union.

Mr. Opitz has vowed to monitor the situation in Ukraine and will continue to consult regularly with Canadian NGO's who are engaged in promoting human rights and democracy in Ukraine. Mr. Opitz continues to urge the Government of Ukraine to uphold its international commitments by adhering to all democratic values and the rule of law.

House of Commons

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