UKRAINE'S CRY FOR HELP AND CANADA'S RESPONSE

Hon. David Kilgour, JD.

To public demonstration at Russian Embassy

Ottawa

12 February 2014

Two months of protests in Kyiv and now across western Ukraine and into its eastern region are parts of a renewed struggle for post-Soviet democratic integrity and national sovereignty by a courageous and long-suffering people.

Canada was the first Western country to recognize Ukraine's independence after 28 million --92 per cent of eligible voters--voted in their 1991 referendum to declare independence from Russia. Many Canadians have a long and close history with Ukraine.

Canadians of origin in Ukraine (numbering about 1.2 million) have played since the 1890s an important role in our own history following three waves of immigration from what is now Ukraine.

Yale history professor Timothy Snyder estimates in his book, *Bloodlands,* that approximately three million Ukrainians were deliberately starved to death by Stalin (Others say it was millions more). As one of about 1100 Canadian observers of the 2006 election in Ukraine, I was held by an imploring voter in his 80s at a polling station near the Russian border, as he recounted through an interpreter how his parents starved to death virtually in front of him as a child in the winter of 1932-33.

In World War Two, an estimated 40,000 Ukrainian-Canadians, or more than ten percent of the entire community then in Canada, enlisted in our armed forces. Between 1947 and 1953, approximately 34,000 Ukrainians came to Canada, many well-educated professionals. They and the generations arriving earlier helped shape Canada into what it is today.

The protests in recent months by widely-based opposition groups, including an estimated ninety per cent of the residents of Kyiv and perhaps half the overall population of Ukraine, against the deeply corrupt President Yanukovich and his political party, their cronies, oligarchs, and Russia's

Putin, remain highly volatile. Yanukovich's draconian legislation against protesters only inflamed tensions. Unfortunately, the protesters still appear to lack an overall organization, leadership or strategy.

Where is the economic pressure from Europe, Canada, the U.S. and other democratic countries to offset the 15 billion dollars offered by Putin to lure Ukraine back into the Russian fold? Many protesters have been on the streets for weeks because they want to be part of Europe and strongly oppose the Putin-Yanukovich deal.

Ukraine is not Russia and the world's advocates for human dignity must do what we can to advance this reality.

Many Ukrainian-Canadians and others in our country and elsewhere seek:

- Targeted sanctions against Yanukovich, his cabinet ministers, MPs who supported police state legislation, prosecutors/ judges who have sentenced peaceful protesters, and the immediate family members of these individuals.
- Speedy and no cost visas for injured protesters, their families and the kin of murdered protesters. Observers should also be sent to document court proceedings against protesters, the injured who arrive in hospitals and clinics, and bodies arriving at Kyiv morgues.

For two months, Ukrainian Canadians and other thoughtful citizens have been in anguish as they've seen Yanukovich brutalize their 'brothers' and 'sisters' as he attempts to introduce a police state with the encouragement and help of the Kremlin. Canada must stand firmly with Ukrainians to maintain national independence and democracy.

Fortunately, the timing of the Winter Olympics is preventing Putin from unleashing Russian violence in Ukraine at least until the Games torch is extinguished in Sochi. Canada, Europe and the U.S. must act now.

Thank you.