

## Ottawa Journal: continued support for Ukraine

Prime Minister Stephen Harper welcomed Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on his first official visit to Canada. In his address to Parliament, President Poroshenko stated, "I am thankful to Canada. Your country was one of the soundest supporters of Ukraine," adding, "As a Commander in Chief, as a Ukrainian, and as a father of a soldier, I thank Canada for each life that is being saved today in the Ukrainian Donetsk by every bulletproof vest or helmet you gave to us."

Since the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, Canada has stood steadfastly with Ukrainians in their struggle to restore political and economic stability. Prime Minister Stephen Harper was the first G7 leader to visit Ukraine in the current crisis. To ensure the integrity of the electoral process, Canada sent 500 electoral observers to monitor the presidential election. And, Prime Minister Harper attended the swearing-in of elected President Petro Poroshenko.

At the same time, Canada has been a leader in condemning Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea, while also taking the lead in imposing economic sanctions and travel bans against those responsible for the ongoing crisis. Prime Minister Harper's leadership within the G7 helped ensure Russia's expulsion from the G8, and our Government continues to work with the international community to help ensure Ukrainians can determine the future of their own country.

During the visit, the leaders discussed a plan to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity and ensure its sovereignty in the face of Russian military aggression in eastern Ukraine. Prime Minister Harper reiterated our principled position stating, "We will never ever recognize the illegal Russian occupation of any Ukrainian territory."

Building on our unwavering support for Ukraine, the leaders reached an agreement on the provision of a Canadian loan to Ukraine. This low-interest loan is helping stabilize Ukraine's economy and promote economic and social development during this challenging time. Prime Minister Harper also announced an additional \$3 million in humanitarian assistance. This funding is helping support our international partners, who are providing medical attention, food, safe drinking water, sanitation, shelter, and emergency response to those in the areas affected by the ongoing conflict, including the nearly 200,000 displaced Ukrainians.

With freedom, democracy, and the rule of law as our guiding principles, our Government will continue to stand with Ukraine. As Prime Minister Harper stated "whatever lies ahead, Canada and Ukraine will continue to move forward together."

**By David Tilson, MP**