

James Bezan

Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake



Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BEZAN DISAPPOINTED WITH UKRAINIAN CONVICTION OF TYMOSHENKO

Selkirk, Manitoba - James Bezan, Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, made the following statement upon learning of the conviction of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. Mrs. Tymoshenko was found guilty of exceeding her authority while holding the position of prime minister when she signed a natural gas deal with the Russian Federation while she was in office. The deal was called "unfavourable to Ukraine". Tymoshenko was sentenced to 7 years' incarceration and banned from holding public office for 3 years. Her legal team has 15 days to appeal this decision.

"I am deeply disappointed, but not surprised, by the Ukrainian court's decision to convict Yulia Tymoshenko, former Prime Minister of Ukraine. As I and others have stated previously, the arrest, detention and trial of Mrs. Tymoshenko has been viewed as being corrupted by political bias and interference. The behaviour of the judiciary during the proceedings did not follow internationally recognized norms for fairness, transparency and due process, and re-enforced the view that the court would reach an arbitrary and predetermined decision against Tymoshenko.

"In a mature democracy, individual rights and freedoms, jurisprudence, the rule of law and independence of the courts must be respected. Unfortunately, the Tymoshenko decision proves that Ukraine's legal system is being applied selectively against the political opposition and opponents to President Viktor Yanukovich. This politically motivated prosecution is a direct attack on Ukraine's democracy. All democracies need to have a vibrant and active political opposition, which is being blatantly thwarted by President Yanukovich in Ukraine.

"I fear that Ukraine under the current administration of President Yanukovich is falling back into a Soviet styled government of authoritarianism. I had high hopes for Ukraine following my visits there in 2010, including one with Prime Minister Harper, that Ukraine would continue to grow as a free, liberal democracy. Unfortunately, it appears that all of the hard work and dreams of Ukrainians over the past 20 years is being jeopardized.

"I call on President Yanukovich to cease and desist in his administration's direct political interference in Ukraine's legal system, as well end the intimidation of academics, journalists and municipal leaders allegedly being done by Yanukovich's office. I thank

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Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird for his strong statement against the Government of Ukraine regarding Tymoshenko's verdict. I believe that diplomatic sanctions, including the suspension of talks on the Canada Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, may also be in order at this time."

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For further information please contact:

Dana Seymour
Office of James Bezan, MP
Phone: 613-992-2032
media@jamesbezan.com