

MP Van Loan sees sanction as 'trivial'

By Mark Pavilons

A federal MP representing King Township has been barred from visiting Russia.

Russian President Vlad



imir Putin has imposed retaliatory sanctions on 13 Canadian officials, including York-Simcoe MP Peter Van Loan.

The sanctions were imposed 'as a response to the unacceptable actions of the Canadian side,' according to work from Moscow. Russia's retaliatory sanctions came as G7 leaders met in The Hague for an emergency meeting to discuss a co-ordinated response to the situation in Ukraine.

The G7 decided not to expel Russia from the G8, but Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been adamant in his opposition to Russia's actions. G7 leaders suspended their own participation in the G8 'until Russia changes course.'

The G7 includes Canada, the U.S., Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Japan. The European Union was also invited to take part in the emergency talks.

Van Loan, Government House Leader, took the sanctions in stride.

'It was a response to our government's efforts to stand up against Russian aggression in Ukraine,' he said.

'From the beginning of Ukrainian citizens' efforts to defend their freedom and sovereignty, our government has stood in vocal support. As Russia has escalated efforts against Ukraine, we have called on Putin to respect international law and commitments. Mr. Putin's escalation and aggression, including a military takeover of Crimea, has forced our government, in coordination with our partners and allies, to impose economic sanctions and take actions that have further isolated his regime diplomatically.'

He called the official sanction against him 'trivial,' 'especially when compared to the plight of the citizens in Crimea and the Ukraine.'

'Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea not only violates Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but poses one of the greatest threats to global security and stability in recent memory. Most troubling though, is its violation of the values of freedom, democracy and human rights - values Canadians and so many others have fought for time and again.'

Van Loan himself has familial experience with the iron first.

'Being of Estonian heritage, I can tell you that the last time Russians imposed travel arrangements on members of my family, they were to Siberia and they were one way. My roots and the experience of my family have taught me that democracy and freedom can be easily lost, and must be vigorously defended. It is the driving force behind my becoming involved in politics. It has been one reason why I have been actively engaged in our government on responding to this issue and Russian aggression. What is at stake here is much greater than the sanctions brought against me and my colleagues.'

He further lauded Prime Minister Harper's leadership in working with Canada's allies to suspend Russia from the G-8, and to demonstrate a strong united front against Russia's 'reckless aggression.'

'We need to ensure we do not see the same type of Russian violations to human rights and democracy that have occurred in the past. Our government will continue to stand with our allies and condemn Putin's military intervention in Ukraine.'