



YVAN BAKER, MPP

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MPP Yvan Baker's Statement on the Holodomor (November 17, 2014)

It's an honour to welcome to the House today a number of guests—and I'd ask all members to welcome them—from the Ukrainian-Canadian community. We have with us Valentina Kuryliw, who is chair of the National Holodomor Education committee, and a number of members of the committee: Nadia Makriy, Lydia Falcomer, Eugene Yakovitch, Lesa and Jaroslav Semcesen, Bob Onyschuk and Myroslava Oleksiuk. Welcome.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had the privilege of travelling to Ukraine to support a medical humanitarian mission where Canadian doctors performed surgery on patients who are victims of the war in eastern Ukraine, people who were fighting for their freedom and their democracy.

I also had the opportunity to visit the national Holodomor Memorial and I stand here today to commemorate the Holodomor. Holodomor commemoration week, which is this week, pays tribute to the 81st anniversary at the Holodomor when Joseph Stalin closed Ukraine's borders and confiscated grain to destroy the Ukrainian population that resisted his rule, who had sought the freedom and democracy that the people of Ukraine are fighting for today.

During that time, 17 people per minute, 1,000 per hour and 25,000 per day were dying from famine. The world was silent. Millions died as a result. My grandmother was one of those people who survived the famine, and she lost three of her brothers to the Soviet regime. She once told me that she hopes that the victims of the Holodomor will not only be remembered but honoured. Honouring means not just remembering them and commemorating them, but also learning from the mistakes that were made and making sure that we take the steps to make sure it never happens again.

One of the things that needs to be done is to make sure that our young people here in Ontario learn about the Holodomor. That is why I'm so pleased to be here today, to stand here with the leaders of the Ukrainian community who have worked towards that for so many years, with you, Mr. Speaker, and other members of the Legislature who co-sponsored a bill to commemorate the Holodomor, and with our Premier and with our education minister who have spoken in the past about the importance of teaching the Holodomor and have ensured that the Holodomor will be part of our curriculum so that every Ontarian learns about the Holodomor.

Today, I'd like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to not only reflect, to commemorate the victims of the Holodomor, but ask us to re-commit ourselves to make sure that we learn from the mistakes of the past and make sure tragedies like this and those that are happening in Ukraine never happen again. Let us do what my grandmother would have asked: Let us not only remember the victims, let us not only commemorate the victims, let us honour them.

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