

I have spoken about why Canada needs the Special Economic Measures Act; now I want to talk about the Bill itself.

This is enabling legislation. It will allow, but not require, the government to apply international economic sanctions. Bill C-53 signals no intention to apply sanctions either more or less frequently than we have in the past. Canadian decisions to use sanctions will be guided by established policies, and the need for sanctions will be dictated by developments in international relations. I can, however, assure you that Canada will continue to work hard with the objective of ensuring that sanctions will be called for only on rare occasions. When the government does decide to apply sanctions, the Act will give it the flexibility to choose those measures which are best suited to the situation at hand.

The essence of the Bill is found in Section 4, which describes the conditions for the application of sanctions and the types of measures that may be applied. Sanctions may be applied following a determination that, in the opinion of the Governor in Council, a grave breach of international peace and security has occurred which is likely to result in a serious international crisis. Sanctions may also be applied in response to a decision, resolution or recommendation of an international organization or association of states of which Canada is a member, calling for the application of sanctions.

Under the Act, the government will be able to seize or sequester the property held in Canada by the sanctioned state or persons associated with it. The government will also be able to make orders or regulations restricting or prohibiting a variety of activities such as trade in goods and services, the execution of financial and commercial transactions, the transfer of technology, and the operation of air and maritime links.

Bill C-53 is fully consistent with long-established Canadian foreign policy that has always treated the application of international economic sanctions as a very serious and exceptional measure. In applying economic sanctions, Canadian governments have been guided by three principles: Canada has sought a broad international agreement on the necessity and usefulness of sanctions; Canada has insisted that the burden of sanctions be shared among the countries imposing them; and, Canada has made every effort to avoid placing Canadian business and workers at a disadvantage in relation to their foreign competitors. Nothing in this Bill requires departure from these long-standing principles of Canadian foreign policy, and they will indeed continue to guide us.

Every situation in which sanctions will be imposed will, of course, be different. To be effective, international economic sanctions should be used in pursuit of very precisely and clearly defined objectives. Sanction measures must be carefully conceived, because those that would be effective in one set of circumstances may be totally inappropriate, perhaps even costly