

Another is a group of singing and dancing students from Fredericton called "Characters Incorporated". Over the past several months, they have toured large parts of our country to inspire pride in Canada through their outstanding performances.

Along the way, they have collected an impressive tribute of signed commitments to Canada from many corner of the country. In due course, they will be presenting that tribute to Parliament through the Prime Minister.

These kinds of initiatives represent the power of public opinion. People do care about Canada, and purposes like these should be encouraged and supported at every stage in the constitutional cause. May every Canadian follow these examples.

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UKRAINE

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, the people of Ukraine made a historic decision. My colleague, the member for Edmonton East, who was in Ukraine as part of a Canadian delegation to observe the elections, confirmed this morning that the people of Ukraine have overwhelmingly chosen to chart their own destiny.

This decision is being celebrated not only in Ukraine but also by hundreds of thousands of sons and daughters of Ukraine who live here in Canada.

I urge the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs to make sure Canada is among the first countries to give official recognition to this most recent addition to the world community of independent nations.

Now is the ideal time for the cultural and economic links between our nations to be strengthened. I can think of no better way to celebrate the 100 years of Ukrainian settlement in Canada than by reaffirming the historic links between our countries today.

Today is a pivotal day for the people of Ukraine. Let us make sure that Canada is there to assist them in the challenges ahead.

NORTHERN TAX BENEFITS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, last week on a tour of the Peace country, Preston Manning, leader of the Reform Party of Canada announced his party would abolish northern tax benefits.

For many years, many of his strongest supporters made themselves rich by taking the profits from our oil and gas fields home with them. Northern benefits have let the hard working people of the north keep just a few of those dollars at home.

I call on Preston Manning to stop listening to the guys with the bucks and help those without. The northern benefits puts money in the jeans of the men and women who toil in Canada's northern communities.

I will be contacting reeves, mayors, MLAs, MPs and other northern community leaders. Getting the northern tax benefit was only half the battle. Now the fight is to keep it.

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[Translation]

EASTERN ONTARIO'S ECONOMY

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the Maurice Lamoureux egg candling centre of St. Isidore closed its doors, with the loss of 34 jobs in my riding. It is the second time in a month that St. Isidore de Prescott, with a population of 500, has been hit in that way. This shutdown is in addition to several others in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I take the opportunity today to repeat the request I made many times in this House. Eastern Ontario needs a regional development program to fight chronic unemployment in our area. My constituents and I are still waiting. They are waiting for a favorable response from this government.