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PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT AT 443 SQUADRON
VICTORIA B.C.

(APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. Bon matin, mesdames et messieurs. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I will proceed with my remarks in just a second. If you don't mind, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to just spend a moment to comment on the events in New Zealand. This is fairly close to home for us. Lauren lived in Christchurch when she was younger, and I think we've all been affected by the images of destruction there. That country has had a very rough year. I just want to take this opportunity on behalf of all Canadians to express our condolences to the country, and obviously more particularly to all those who have lost family and friends in the terrible earthquake there. We've certainly been in touch with our friends in New Zealand, offered them our assistance if they should need it. My office has been in touch with that of Prime Minister Key, and I hope to be speaking to him in the not-too-distant future.

Encore, je voudrais exprimer nos condoléances à la part des Canadiens, des Canadiennes pour le tremblement de terre à la Nouvelle-Zélande. C'est une année très difficile pour ce pays. Je voudrais exprimer pas seulement nos condoléances au pays, mais surtout aux amis, à la famille des gens qui ont perdu leurs proches dans cet événement. Nous avons offert notre aide au gouvernement si le gouvernement a besoin de ça, et aussi mon bureau a été en communication avec le bureau du Premier ministre Key, et je m'attends à un appel entre nous dans des heures qui viennent.

I want to take up, ladies and gentlemen, where Peter started off by thanking him for his warm words of greeting, and also for the

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tremendous work that he is doing as Minister of National Defence, as we continue the long job of reequipping and rebuilding our Armed Forces. I also want to say it's always great to see my other friends and colleagues who are here, Stockwell Day, president of the Treasury Board and regional minister for British Columbia, also Gary Lunn, my good friend and colleague who, the Honourable Gary Lunn who's here with us today in his own area. (APPLAUSE) Great to have you. And I know my colleague Rob Anders was also here as well, so I pass on my greetings to Rob as well. I'd also like to acknowledge Rear Admiral Greenwood, Commander, Maritime Forces Pacific, Colonel (inaudible), commander, Air Component Coordination Element Pacific, and of course, Lieutenant-Colonel Allan, commanding officer of 443 Squadron. It's always a great pleasure for me to visit the men and women of the Canadian Forces who do such a great job on behalf of our country, but a particular pleasure to visit your establishment and meet your personnel and to enjoy their hospitality, Colonel Allan. Appreciate it.

For the benefit of anybody here who doesn't know – Peter made some reference to it – who doesn't know the whole story, Hornet Squadron is one of the great names of the Canadian Armed Forces. Raised as a spitfire squadron nearly 70 years ago, 443 earned a tremendous reputation over Europe during the Second World War. Now reconstituted as a maritime helicopter squadron here on Canada's west coast, 443 is as dangerous to Canada's enemies today as it ever was. Deployed afloat, any one of its Sea Kings will extend the reach of a Canadian warship to detect, and just as important, to counter a variety of seaborne threats. And in a few years, 443 will be reequipped with the powerful state-of-the-art Sikorsky CH 148 Cyclone that will... (APPLAUSE) The CH 148 that will – and I'm not sure

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how you say this nicely – the Cyclone will give the Hornets a bigger sting. (APPLAUSE) It will be a much bigger sting. Now, our purpose here today is to now, is to announce an important investment in Canada's west coast defences. Over there across from where the squadron's existing Sea King hangar stands, our government will build a new larger building. It will accommodate the nine Cyclone maritime helicopters that are to replace 443 Squadron's six old Sea Kings. I'll have a little more to say about the entire project in a few minutes. First, though, I want to make a larger point about national defence and why we're here today.

We live in a society that expects many things from government; so many, in fact, that we need to regularly and deliberately remind ourselves of this fundamental truth. The first duty of a national government everywhere and always is to protect its people and its territory from external threats. If you don't do that, you soon don't have a country, and you don't have any of the other good things you once thought were more important. So while the nature and intensity of threats to Canada change over the years, this duty never does. And our government takes it very, very seriously. Let me give you a short progress report.

Il y a près de trois ans, nous nous sommes rendus à la principale base navale de la côte est pour lancer la stratégie de notre gouvernement, la stratégie de défense Le Canada d'abord. Il s'agit d'un plan à long terme visant à ce que les Forces armées canadiennes disposent les gens, de l'équipement et de soutien dont elles ont besoin pour leurs missions nationales, continentales et mondiales de défense, de sécurité et d'aide humanitaire.

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Nearly three years ago we went to Canada's major east coast naval base to launch our government's Canada First defence strategy. This is a long-term plan to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces have the people, the equipment and the support they need to do what we ask them to do or what we might ask them to do in an unknown future. So there in Halifax, we said we would strengthen the Canadian Armed Forces to defend and protect our country. We also said we would shoulder our fair share of the burden of defending North America. And because Canadians aspire to be a force for good in the world, we committed to ensuring that Canada can be a robust, reliable contributor to global security and to humanitarian interventions. Ladies and gentlemen, that is what we've set out to do, and that is what we are doing. We have expanded and extensively reequipped the Canadian Armed Forces. We are rebuilding our capacity to share in domestic, hemispheric and global defence security and assistance missions. And as a result of our reequipping the forces, our men and women in uniform have been able to do great work from unprecedented manoeuvres in our Arctic, to fighting a hot war with the world's enemies in Afghanistan, to bringing relief to Haiti. (APPLAUSE) Canadians are no longer seen around the world as people who talk a good game but don't get off the benches. So we shall continue with the Canada First defence strategy, and the new Cyclone helicopters and this base reconstruction here that we're announcing today are perfect examples of what that means in terms of our government's commitment to action.

Donc je suis heureux de vous annoncer officiellement qu'ici à Pat Bay, nous allons construire un centre combiné d'opérations et de maintenance pour le 443^e escadron et ses nouveaux hélicoptères Cyclone.

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I'm pleased to officially tell you, therefore, that here at Pat Bay, we shall build a combined operations and maintenance centre for 443 Squadron. (APPLAUSE) It will be ready in 2014. That's when the squadron will need it as it reequips with the Cyclone. The new building will consolidate all squadron functions under one roof, making the squadron more efficient in many ways. It will also be a solid investment in the future of naval aviation in Canada. And it will be one more highly visible demonstration to Canadians of our government's faithfulness to the nation's core priority, defending Canada and Canadians. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I believe in general that it is always better to be an optimist. And our country has certainly never gone and will never go looking for trouble. However, many times during the past 200 years, trouble has come looking for us, and the pessimists have had their day. So while Canada does not aspire to be an armed camp, neither is there any place in national defence for wilful naïveté. That is why, guided by the Canada First defence strategy, our government will continue to ensure that our men and women in uniform get top-of-the-line infrastructure and equipment so that they can do their jobs as safely and as effectively as possible, whatever the future may hold. Merci beaucoup, thank you. (APPLAUSE)

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