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PRIME MINISTER'S SCRUM IN KUUJJUAQ

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DIMITRI SOUDAS (Deputy Press Secretary to the Prime Minister): We're just going to let the cameras position. Ok, great, so we'll start with Mr. William Takuna, CBC North. Go ahead.

REPORTER: You can't hear me, eh?

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Here you go...

REPORTER: Yeah, Mister...

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Yeah, perfect.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Yeah, we can hear you.

REPORTER: ...Harper, effective date, I wonder if a date has been set? I know that the act is there now for the offshore agreement, but when is the actual effective date so that people can (inaudible)?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: The act comes into force at a date chosen by the governor and council. Have you chosen a date, Chuck?

CHUCK STRAHL (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Well, the... The Prime Minister's right, and the only complication is just when it got approved on February 14th we weren't able to get the financial part of the...what was necessary done before the fiscal year end to get it into the original estimates process. So now it has to go through supplementary estimates, so all those documents would be prepared, Parliament has to pass those supplementary estimates, so we're probably looking at May or June because of the financial considerations, so it's all in order. The act itself is passed, and then the financial considerations can't be

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dealt with until the supplementaries are passed, so it'll be probably May or June, somewhere there.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: (Inaudible) give everyone an opportunity. We'll go to Mr. Charlie Shipaluk from TNI.

REPORTER: Welcome Mr. Harper. With this Nunavik Inuit land claims agreement, the Inuit of Nunavik have been...their quota of beluga hunting has been talked about for many years. We have our neighbours in Nunavut who have harvesting rights that are so different from Nunavik. Will this Nunavik Inuit land claims agreement give better quotas to Nunavumi since our elders and hunters, that belugas...there's more beluga than what DFO is saying.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: The agreement does, as I mentioned earlier, contain harvesting rights. In terms of commercial quotas, you know, I'm not in a position to answer that question in any detail. It's ultimately handled by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I understand there continues...you know, continues to be on the beluga whale issue continues to a local issue here, and obviously the government of Canada is concerned with trying to balance traditional rights of Inuit to hunt that species and also the preservation of the species itself is a major concern of the government, so I say I'm not in a position to give you an anymore detailed answer than that, but we are aware of the issue.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: (Inaudible), Canadian Press.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, this is, I suppose, the last chance we'll get to speak with you before you head off to the NATO summit. I'd like to ask you what degree of certainty you have going into this summit that Canada will receive the troop support that it hopes from its allies. You've

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been speaking obviously with your counterparts over the last few weeks. How certain, how confident are you heading into the summit that this is going to happen?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, first of all as you will recall when we had the summit in Riga a couple of years ago, we encouraged all our NATO allies to make additional troop commitments to Afghanistan. There've been substantial additional commitments made over the past two years. In fact in regional command south I was looking at some of the numbers the other day. I'm sure we can get those for you. We have close to doubled the number of NATO troops on the ground over that period of time. I anticipate in the weeks to come there will be additional commitments made in Afghanistan by some of our allies, and I also fully anticipate that that will result in Canada having a partner in Kandahar and Canada receiving both the troops we're looking for in Kandahar and the equipment. I have a very high level of certainty of that. I don't think we will necessarily finish that process at Bucharest, but we will finish it in the very near future. It's all moving along very well, but I think what is encouraging in the process is not just that we will receive a partner in Kandahar, but this will be reflective of frankly a greater engagement of NATO allies in Afghanistan generally.

REPORTER: In French (inaudible).

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: En français...en français, pour... J'ai mentionné qu'à Riga il y a deux années au dernier sommet de l'OTAN, nous avons demandé un engagement plus fort de nos alliés de l'OTAN et nous avons reçu pendant les deux années passées des augmentations de troupe importantes. J'ai regardé les chiffres il y a quelques journées et j'ai noté pratiquement un double des nombres des forces de

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l'OTAN dans le Sud de l'Afghanistan par exemple. Je ne suis pas certain que nous finirons notre projet à Bucarest, mais je suis plus ou moins certain que le Canada va atteindre un partenaire à Kanadahar et des équipements additionnels que nous avons demandés, que nous avons cherchés et que nous recevrons ces appuis additionnels pendant les semaines à venir dans l'horaire défini. En même temps je suis encouragé que les résultats de nos efforts et des efforts des autres sont en général un plus grand engagement de l'OTAN et de nos alliés en Afghanistan, et nous allons voir ça pendant les semaines à venir.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: (Inaudible).

JOURNALISTE: (Inaudible) du hockey. À votre avis quel devrait être le rôle du gouvernement dans la réglementation de la violence au hockey et (inaudible)?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Oui, évidemment je suis...je connais...je connais les événements récemment dans la Ligue junior majeure du Québec. Évidemment comme tous les parents de l'hockey, je m'inquiète de ces événements, mais j'ai confiance que la Ligue junior majeure du Québec peut régler ces problèmes et peut se régler. Pour le gouvernement du Canada, ma préférence en général est que nous serons préoccupés avec le code criminel du Canada, et nous avons un grand problème dans ce pays des crimes, une situation criminelle qui augmente, et ça c'est la vraie priorité du gouvernement du Canada.

And I'll say the same thing, obviously as a hockey parent we're all concerned with what we saw recently in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. I understand the Quebec Hockey League is taking a look at that. I have confidence in their ability to deal with this problem and I think that's how it should be dealt with. The government of Canada has important...

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has an important agenda in terms of reforming the criminal code of Canada and cracking down on crime in this country. That has us more than occupied and that is the thing that I think our government will remain preoccupied with, our serious crimes against persons and property.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Thank you very much everybody. Merci beaucoup and Minister Strahl can maybe take a couple of questions from the reporters one on one (inaudible). Thank you very much.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Yeah, we'll see you all...some of you at the airport, anyway. I hope we'll get some pictures there. Thanks everyone. (APPLAUSE)

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