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**PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH IN VANCOUVER**

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(APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. Thank you, James, for that warm introduction. Actually, you know, I didn't want to go through and introduce my colleagues all again. I know they've been introduced, but I have to say something about James, and that is to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate him on his marriage. It's wonderful news. (APPLAUSE) Let me also just extend my greetings obviously to all colleagues, but particularly to Andrew Saxton, because being the master of ceremonies, he was not introduced. Thank you, Andrew, for your hard work as Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury Board, and also on behalf of the people of North Vancouver. I know that they appreciate it. Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE) It is great to have so many of my colleagues here: John, whose riding it is, Cathy, Lynn, also Senator Martin, Yonah Martin; great to have all of you out.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, it's a pleasure to be on the North Shore, and I want to begin by thanking Jonathan Whitworth, but really all of you, managers, owners, and of course, all of the employees here at Seaspan Marine Corporation for hosting us here today. For this occasion, it is very appropriate that we should be gathered in this truly historic part of BC's great city on the coast. People have been building ships in North Vancouver, as James mentioned, for more than 100 years. And I'm delighted to tell you in this, the traditional centre of Canada's West Coast shipbuilding industry, you will be starting a new chapter in the illustrious maritime history of this company. (APPLAUSE) Illustrious, of great national significance, and

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of course, a huge economic driver; at times, anyway. I'm going to say a little bit more later about the cyclical nature of shipbuilding. First, though, I do want to talk about our government's plan for the shipbuilding industry.

Notre plan sera trois décennies de stabilité pour les constructeurs navals de partout au pays, ainsi que pour fournir à la prochaine génération de personnel navire et de personnel naval, et de la garde côtière canadienne de l'équipement essentiel.

Our plan will provide three decades of stability for shipbuilders right across this country. And it will give the next generation of this country's naval and coast guard personnel the vital equipment that they need to do their jobs. Earlier today, we announced an umbrella agreement with Irving Shipyard in Halifax. It defines the terms under which that company will participate in Canada's national shipbuilding procurement strategy. I'm pleased to announce now a similar agreement by which North Vancouver's Seaspan Marine Corporation also becomes a partner in our national shipbuilding procurement strategy. (APPLAUSE)

Now, let me just answer this question before it is asked: why Seaspan? Because you earned it. Because, like Irving in Nova Scotia, Seaspan won a transparent, hands off selection process fair and square. I'm stressing this because if you read in the papers, you know that some politicians, including the national leader of the NDP, didn't want an open competition. Now, look, we all understand that it is tempting to play politics with projects of this magnitude. But playing projects... playing politics with military planning is how our navy and coast guard fleets ended up with ships that should have been replaced years ago, and it is exactly what gives us the boom and bust cycle so familiar to this industry. That's why our government,

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under our long-term National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy, designed a hands off evaluation process. For these shipbuilding contracts, we launched the most open, fair and transparent competition ever held. We made sure everyone understood the rules. In fact, the yards had their say on the rules. Lobbyists were told to stay away. Slick advertising campaigns were ignored by the judges, and then the bids were evaluated on merit and merit alone, and it is on the basis that Seaspan won, and you should be very proud of that victory. (APPLAUSE)

Today we're taking the first formal steps in bringing this program to life. This agreement clears the way for Seaspan to receive initial orders for at least seven ships for the Canadian coast guard and for the Royal Canadian Navy. That means jobs and growth here in North Vancouver and in many other communities for many years to come. Now, I want to tell you a little bit of a North Vancouver story. You probably know it, some of you. Hundreds of ships have been built not far from where we're standing. Small warships, victory ships, coastal vessels, tugs, ferries, a very wide variety. But there's one in particular: the RCMP schooner St. Roch that made history. She came off the slips in 1928 a mile or so just east of here, and years later, she became notable as the first ship to navigate the Northwest Passage from West to East. It took her two years, and it was no easy passage. But your predecessors built her tough, Vancouver tough, and she made it. Now, in a nice example of history repeating itself, one of the coast guard ships to be built here, actually right here, is the polar icebreaker John G. Diefenbaker. In every conceivable way but one, she will be quite unlike the St. Roch. The John G. Diefenbaker will be steel, not wood, four times as long, 60 times as heavy, 500 times as powerful. And instead of picking her way around ice floes, she will go

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through eight feet of solid ice at three knots. And it won't take her two years to cross the Arctic. From Nanisivik, she will reach the North Pole in as little as two weeks. However, in one very important respect, she will be exactly like the St. Roch. She too will be a vital instrument of Arctic policy, the tangible and vigilant expression of Canadian sovereignty over our North. (APPLAUSE) Now, all this I tell you because you should know that the work this agreement authorizes provides much more than a paycheque. I know there's nothing wrong with a paycheque. (LAUGHTER) But it provides much more than a paycheque. This is work of national importance, and when you see the fine ships you've built carrying Canada's flag to the ends of the earth, you will be glad that you had a part in doing it. Now... (APPLAUSE)

Now let me just say also a few words about the future of shipbuilding in Canada. As I mentioned earlier, an uneven flow of orders has put this industry through repeated boom-bust cycles. Yards became highly efficient, then closed for lack of work, and everybody suffered. The nation lost vital strategic assets, skilled men and women lost well-aid work; those who could, moved. And skills were effectively lost, often for good. Communities gutted this way take years to recover. There is a better way. It is our government's national shipbuilding procurement strategy, through which we shall rebuild almost the entire fleets of the Canadian Coast Guard Service and the Royal Canadian Navy. Indeed, this is the largest single hardware investment ever undertaken by the government of Canada. It will create over its 30 year duration some 75 million person hours of work. That will mean some 4000 jobs here on the West Coast. Not, by the way, just here in North Vancouver, but also in yards at Victoria, Nanaimo, and Port Alberni. In addition, all Canadian yards will in due course be able to bid on the regular

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maintenance, like extension refit and repair work for these ships. And that's not all.

De plus, 116 autres petits navires seront construits. Des autres constructeurs navals canadiens auront l'occasion de soumissionner pour ces contrats.

There are some 116 additional smaller ships to be built; the rest of Canada's shipyards will have an opportunity to bid on those contracts. So today is in all respects, then, a good day, a very good day. A good day for the navy and the coast guard, for British Columbia, and for Canada, and of course, for Seaspan as well. Seaspan, I know, I've been told, is a newer company, but you have a splendid corporate family tree that includes names that go back to the earliest days of West Coast shipbuilding. I was amazed to learn that there are trawlers built by one of your predecessor companies 100 years ago that are still at sea. Still at sea fishing. So I know we have the right partner. And all we ask you to do is to build this new ship the way you have always built ships, build them to last. And I know you will.

Félicitations.

Congratulations once again. I look forward to working with you. (APPLAUSE)

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