



## **PRIME MINISTER'S Q&A AT CABINET OUT**

Event- - February 6 - 16:26 pm - 14:57 minutes

REPORTER: ...Harper, can you discuss...

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Je vais une petite déclaration de trois annonces et puis je peux répondre à quelques questions. Premièrement, c'est la décision du cabinet de rappeler le parlement le trois avril. Trois avril. On va commencer une nouvelle session parlementaire.

Deuxièmement, le cabinet a décidé de poursuivre nos politiques en matière de garde d'enfants. Ça veut dire que nous avons l'intention de commencer la nouvelle allocation familiale le premier juillet de cette année. Nous avons l'intention de mettre fin aux accords actuels avec les provinces par le 20...le 31 mars 2007. À ce moment, nous serons en train de mettre en place notre nouveau programme pour la création de places de garderies. Et troisièmement, le ministre de l'Agriculture aura une annonce après moi.

So just to repeat that in English, three things. First of all, we will bring

Parliament back the third of April. That's when the new Parliamentary session will begin. The cabinet has decided. Secondly, the cabinet has decided and reiterated our plan to proceed with our plans for daycare. On the first of July, we will put in place the new universal payment to families with children under six. By the 31st of March or on the 31st of March 2007, we will phase out the existing agreements with the provinces and at that point in time, we will be in the process of putting in place the new program for the creation of childcare spaces that we discussed during the election campaign; and third, the Minister of Agriculture will have a short announcement based on a cabinet decision (inaudible).

REPORTER: Mr. Harper, Derek Burney is...

JOURNALISTE: Quel de vos ministres qui va être responsable du déséquilibre fiscal? Est-ce que c'est un dossier que vous allez piloter et avez-vous une meilleure idée de votre échéancier là-dessus?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Évidemment c'est toujours, c'est toujours le rôle du premier ministre d'avoir une position importante dans les négociations avec des provinces. Nous avons un ministre, M. Chong, un ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales. M. Chong aura la responsabilité en collaboration évidemment avec moi comme premier ministre.

REPORTER: You don't have a Deputy Prime...

JOURNALISTE: Votre échéancier là-dessus?

REPORTER: Sorry.

JOURNALISTE: Votre échéancier, (inaudible) vous en avez un échéancier...?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: L'horaire...?

JOURNALISTE: Oui. Est-ce que c'est quelque chose que vous allez faire dans votre première année? Est-ce que vous allez vous donner jusqu'au mois de septembre pour y penser? Vous allez agir vite, pas vite?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Nous commencerons des discussions aussitôt que possible. J'espère d'avoir un progrès pendant la première année mais on va voir.

REPORTER: Mr. Harper, you don't have a Deputy Prime Minister, but Derek Burney in his news conference said there's an acting Prime Minister?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, yeah. What I've decided is given the smaller size of the cabinet and our general desire to eliminate unnecessary positions, I decided not to appoint a Deputy Prime Minister and to revert to an older style we used to have when cabinet was smaller,

and that would be that the Prime Minister would simply designate an Acting Prime Minister when the Prime Minister leaves the country or is otherwise unavailable. And I will probably designate different individuals on different occasions.

REPORTER: How do you expect Michael Fortier to answer questions? Like, he won't be in the House of Commons, he'll be in the Senate. How do you expect him to be accountable as Minister of Public Works?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, there have been...this is not unprecedented to have ministers in the Senate. It hasn't happened in recent years, but it certainly happened in the 70s and 80s that ministers other than the government House Leader were present in the Senate and answer questions in the Senate. There is a Question Period in the Senate and as you know, unlike in the...well, even more so than in the House of Commons, the Opposition has a majority in the Senate, so Mr. Fortier will obviously take questions there, and also from the press as well.

REPORTER: Can you explain again why you decided to put him in the Senate when you've said, you said in the campaign you wouldn't put anyone in cabinet that wasn't elected.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: That's not what I said in the campaign.

What I said is, I said we would keep our options open in the case of a situation where regions of the country did not elect anyone. Excuse me, let me finish. I think the Greater Montreal Region must have a cabinet minister. I'm delighted that someone of Michael Fortier's experience and background is willing to serve. I don't think it's acceptable for a cabinet minister to have no Parliamentary role, so the precedent in this case is that they sit in the Senate, and in this case, as I say, Mr. Fortier has agreed that he will vacate his Senate seat at the next federal election so we will be able to proceed with Senate elections.

REPORTER: Mr. Harper, on the daycare...on the daycare file, on the daycare file, we know that the Liberals certainly didn't run...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: (Inaudible) I can answer very quickly, the Greater Toronto Area has representatives in cabinet, as does the Greater Vancouver Area. Only the Greater Montreal Area would not have, which is why I appointed a senator.

REPORTER: I want to ask you about the daycare file. Both the Liberals and the NDP were really on opposite ends of this file. How are you going to try and get this through if you don't have cooperation from those two parties?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I think the payment to...the payment that we'll be making to Canadian families is overwhelmingly popular with those families and the other parties will have to make up their mind on that, but I think it's a popular move. It's obviously a commitment we made in the campaign. We'll put that to Parliament, but I would obviously urge the other parties to understand that the public expects us to proceed with such a payment and will welcome such a payment.

REPORTER: I want to ask you a follow-up, just a follow-up. On 24 Sussex Drive, is it in such disrepair that you won't be able to move into 24 Sussex for a while?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: No, we'll be moving into 24 Sussex on Thursday. The delay is for some personal reasons and also we've allowed them some time to paint a couple of rooms. I gather there do have to be some structural improvements, and I've said we're, the family's certainly prepared to make considerable time available during the summer to proceed with those.

REPORTER: When will you bring forward a budget, a budget?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: There will be a budget in the spring.

REPORTER: What about same-sex marriage, and...

REPORTER: (Inaudible) You were very eloquent during the election campaign on the need to curb the influence of lobbyists, and here you have a former defence lobbyist as Defence Minister. Surely there's some (inaudible) there, isn't there?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: No, what I've said, what I said, I was asked about this during the campaign. What I said is what we want to prevent is people using public service as a way of getting private profit later on. And we're obviously going to outlaw that practice. People who have experience in the private sector and wish to serve in government, we don't want to discourage that. Obviously we take all necessary steps to ensure that there are no conflict of interests. Having worked in an industry in the past does not constitute a conflict of interest in the present.

REPORTER: How soon will you move to introduce the motion on same-sex marriage, and also, how quickly will you move to abolish the gun registry?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: On the first, likely not in the spring, but I would suspect soon after, although in fairness, cabinet has not put its mind to that, but that's the rough timetable I have in mind. In terms of the gun registry, cabinet had a discussion of that today, and obviously we have some criminal justice proposals as part of our five priorities that we

will be proceeding with in the spring session. Beyond that, I'll wait for further cabinet discussion to let you know how we'll proceed with the gun registry.

REPORTER: (Inaudible) first priority was going to be to introduce an accountability act. Your first decision here seems to be the childcare act. Childcare...not act, but childcare payments. Can you help us reconcile that?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I just want to make it clear the decision that cabinet has taken that we'll be proceeding with the childcare, there, we had a discussion on the accountability act briefly in cabinet and we haven't changed our plan. The first piece of legislation that will appear in the spring session will be the federal accountability act.

JOURNALISTE: Pouvez-vous nous expliquer, pouvez-vous nous expliquer comment vous avez rejoint M. Emerson, comment ça s'est produit?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Après plusieurs discussions avec mes collègues, j'ai décidé que le gouvernement a besoin des qualités de M. Emerson. Comme j'ai dit depuis longtemps, je suis impressionné par ses capacités et j'ai décidé de téléphoner directement à M. Emerson pour lui

offrir une position dans le cabinet. Je fais l'emphase sur le point que ce n'est pas un évidement. Ce n'est pas un offert partisan, ce n'est pas une action contre le Parti libéral. C'est à mon avis comme Premier ministre désigné, c'est mon avis dans des intérêts de Vancouver, de la Colombie-Britannique et du pays que M. Emerson participe dans le nouveau cabinet et il a décidé de (inaudible).

JOURNALISTE: Quand avez-vous décidé ça? Quand l'avez vous appelé exactement et est-ce qu'on doit voir là-dedans une espèce de compromis compte tenu vous êtes en gouvernement minoritaire d'aller chercher un ministre libéral? Est-ce que c'est (inaudible)?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Je pense que évidemment ce n'est pas une question de chiffres. Je pense que ça ne fait beaucoup de différence dans les chiffres du parlement. Non, c'est juste ma détermination d'avoir le meilleur cabinet possible et mon...ma croyance que M. Emerson pouvait sans difficulté un membre d'un cabinet conservateur et dans ce rôle, il serait capable de mieux servir ses concitoyens et le pays.

REPORTER: Why shouldn't he go through a by-election, though? Why shouldn't he go through a by-election? He was elected a Liberal. He was banging in Liberal signs last month.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, we had a...we had a process...it was discontinued I believe in the 1920s when people were appointed to cabinet, they sought by-election. I've said that in the past when I was asked that I wasn't going to proceed with by-elections in these kinds of cases. Look, I think Mr. Emerson has to explain his decision to his constituents. I don't think he will have any difficulty doing that. He's long been known as on the conservative side of the Liberal Party, and I think his constituents and certainly people in the Vancouver area and business people in the Vancouver area have already been clear that he can do a lot more for his constituents and for Vancouver by participating in the new government.

JOURNALISTE: (Inaudible) des garderies, est-ce que ça sera une mesure qui sera adopté dans le budget, par le budget, et comment comptez-vous convaincre les partis d'opposition d'adopter cette mesure-là avec vous puisque vous avez besoin d'eux pour la faire adopter, je présume?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Évidemment pour créer l'allocation familiale, une nouvelle allocation familiale, c'est nécessaire d'avoir un budget et l'appui des partis de l'opposition et j'ai l'intention d'inclure cette proposition dans le prochain budget.

JOURNALISTE: Comment pensez-vous les convaincre de voter de votre

côté puisque du côté des libéraux, par exemple, les garderies nationales, c'est leur bébé, là?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Mais ce n'est pas une question des garderies...le programme de garderies, j'ai l'intention évidemment de remplacer ça, mais la question dans le budget et dans un projet de loi sera la création de la nouvelle allocation. Ça sera la décision que le parlement devra prendre et comme je viens de dire en anglais, je pense que les parents de ce pays s'attendent à cette nouvelle allocation. C'était un engagement précis du nouveau gouvernement. C'est populaire et j'encourage les autres partis de l'appuyer.

REPORTER: (Inaudible) Mr. Emerson can move with ease from a Liberal government to a Conservative government indicate that you've moved so far now to the centre or to the left that there's no difference between the two parties?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: No, I think...I shouldn't really speak for Mr. Emerson, but Mr. Emerson was, as you know, recruited from private life, much as I recruited Mr. Fortier; he was recruited from private life by Mr. Martin, and recruited I think at a time where he and a number of other people expected a...Mr. Martin was perhaps going to have, for lack of a better term, a more conservative approach to governing the country than

his predecessor. Mr. Emerson served Mr. Martin loyally and faithfully. Mr. Martin has departed the scene, obviously, and I saw nothing based on my knowledge of David Emerson, and my colleagues' knowledge, nothing in his philosophy that would prevent him from participating in our government and making a worthwhile contribution, so I decided to reach beyond the normal practice of simply appointing partisan people, and I think this is good for the country.

REPORTER: What about the fact that he said...

REPORTER: How are you any different from...how are you any different than Mr. Martin then?

REPORTER: How's it different than Belinda Stronach?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well...

REPORTER: There was nothing in her philosophy that prevented her from sitting as a Liberal.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: That was her decision and obviously...

REPORTER: Which you condemned.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: ...that was a question... Well, I...

REPORTER: You condemned them.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, look, in fairness, I questioned the motivation. Belinda Stronach sought to leave the party. Mr. Emerson, in fairness, did not seek to leave the Liberal Party; I approached him and asked him to serve the country in this capacity. I made arguments that obviously were compelling, and I think this is in the interests of the country. I did not ask Mr. Emerson and I don't view this as being a hint to take this as an attack on the Liberal Party or something to be done for partisan reasons. This is to be done for the sake of having a stronger cabinet and a good government for the country.

REPORTER: But you attacked Paul Martin. You attacked Paul Martin.

REPORTER: Three weeks ago he said, "I'm going to be Stephen Harper's worst enemy." I guess he's changed.

-30-