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**PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH GLOBAL TV**

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ERIC SORENSEN (Reporter, Global TV): Prime Minister, thank you.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, thanks for having me.

ERIC SORENSEN: Start with the G20. The financial system needs to be fixed. The United States is emphasizing stimulus spending, the Europeans, more emphasis on regulations. Your view?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, according to our negotiators, there's less of a difference of opinion than you would understand through the media. I think both are clearly important. The number one job has to be fixing the financial system. We cannot have a global recovery until the American and global financial systems are fixed. The United States has been taking some important measures in that regard. At the same time, we all made commitments at the last G20 meeting to engage in coordinated macroeconomic policies, including fiscal stimulus, and Canada has more than exceeded the two percent target that the IMF set. Others haven't, and I hope we'll find a meeting of the minds in this. It's critical that this summit do two things, one, that it focus on the immediate economic problems, not get diverted into a whole lot of other issues, but also that we do find a consensus on these big economic issues.

ERIC SORENSEN: Some have suggested the two percent for Canada has been some old spending, old money and not all new money.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: No, I don't think that's accurate at all. I think if you look at the size of our fiscal stimulus this year, and you have to remember, in our economic action plan, our budget, we very

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much laid it out in a way that's coordinated with bringing provinces and other levels of government into that, into providing our own incremental resources. The combined level of that spending is about 3.2 percent, so it is significant and (inaudible) target at this point.

ERIC SORENSEN: Your role at the G20 meeting, Canada sets a good example relative to the other countries, and you're an economist, although I don't know if being an economist is in the doghouse these days, given what happened in the past year, but do you have more credibility with other world leaders just because of what Canada has done and the fact that you understand this file?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I think first of all Canada has a lot of credibility, because we've had some very noticeable strengths. The obvious one has been the fact we haven't had a collapse of any significant financial institution, or any big bailouts of the banks or anything like that. Our banking system is recognized, our financial sector's recognized as being the strongest in the world. That's why Canada's co-chairing the G20 working group on financial regulation, on the form of financial regulations. I think we're going have a...we're co-chairing with that Italy, and I think we've got a report that's going to get a broad consensus, and I think is going to...is going to provide a path for the years to come so we avoid this in future. In terms of my own...you know, I don't know whether in terms of my own background as an economist gives me credibility. It certainly gives me more comfort in talking about the issues. I was telling some people the other day that, you know, you hear everybody saying, "I studied all these things in university and never used them." I've actually found, you know, that everything I've studied in university I've actually been using, including a

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whole lot of scenarios that we were taught were just textbook, that were unlikely to ever happen in the real world, and yet we're into those kinds of situations.

ERIC SORENSEN: protectionism is the other side that has to be a concern, and the instinct to buy American, notwithstanding our trade arrangements, has to be a concern. It's almost a patriotic fervour here to buy American, state by state, company by company.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Yeah, and it's very troubling, and look, we understand that, that impulse, and it exists in a lot of countries. You know, let's...our people are suffering. We're putting government money in. Let's make sure that money helps our people. The problem is that we're in a global economy. We're in a global recession. We know particularly in Canada, we're in a recession because everyone else is in a recession, not because of anything we did in our country. If we all go out there and have stimulus packages that are designed to help only our own countries, and particularly at the expense of others, that is going to damage the global economy. It's the global economy we have to kick-start. We have to do it at the national level, but we have to do it in a way that promotes economic growth around the world, and we absolutely must avoid protectionism. You know, I've given speeches, as you know, about the difference...the differences between this era and the 1930s, what we must avoid, and there are several things we must avoid, but the most important is we must avoid protectionism.

ERIC SORENSEN: That would kill Canada.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, it would kill Canada, but if global trade retreated, that would be an enormous additional recessionary impulse across the globe.

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ERIC SORENSEN: On June first, 200 million Americans won't be able to cross, drive across the border and back again without a... because they won't have passports. They won't have these compliant documents. That's a form of protectionism.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, it...there are protectionist aspects to what the Americans are doing at the border. In fairness, these steps were taken post-9/11...

ERIC SORENSEN: Sure, and has the effect...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: ...as part of a security... part of a security agenda. Well, it doesn't have to. As you know in Canada we've been very aggressive in getting passports to people, in getting passports or passport compliant documents, passport equivalent documents. We now have something like close to 80 percent of Canadian adults have passports or passport equivalent documents for getting in and out of the United States. The Americans...

ERIC SORENSEN: That's the problem.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: The Americans may not...I don't want to question what they're doing, because I know they're working hard, but I'm not sure the American people have really caught up to where their government is, and look, I think this is sad in many ways. I think the fact we had a, you know, a border with free social interaction was a great thing, but obviously in the world of post-9/11, we're in a whole bunch of different security concerns.

ERIC SORENSEN: Janet Napolitano says our border and the Mexican border needs to be treated in the same way. Is that...is that fair?

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And can you get that June first deadline pushed back, just given that there will be so many people who won't be ready?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, the deadline's been pushed back many times. We are ready. If the United States is not ready, that's a decision they're going to have to make. Look, obviously we have a strong view that there is a difference between the Canadian and American border and the Mexican-American border, both in terms of the general security of that border, but also in terms of the historic nature of our social interaction. So we'll continue to do what we can to emphasize those similarities.

ERIC SORENSEN: NATO meeting coming up as well. For Barack Obama, Afghanistan has become Afghanistan and Pakistan. Where does Canada fit into that? He's talking about wanting more help from allies. Clearly Canada has been pulling more than its weight in Afghanistan. Is there a new role for Canada, and more that Canada can do in the region?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, as you know, in terms of our military mission, we have a Parliamentary resolution we're working on that focuses that military mission and the training of Afghan forces and the end of the military mission in 2011. At the same time, as you know, we're very anxious to be helpful. We're vastly increasing our civilian presence, governance and development efforts. That's something the United States, Secretary Gates has said they're looking for going forward. And we will have some interesting discussions. Obviously our military and other efforts have been focused on Kandahar province, which is the most difficult province. It's the centre of the insurgency, but obviously if you're looking at that insurgency in the long term and the wider threat it presents, it is

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increasingly hard to separate that from the reality on the Pakistan side of the border. We'll obviously be engaging in discussions with the United States to see how we can be helpful in that regard, but obviously within the confines of our Parliamentary authority.

ERIC SORENSEN: Will you feel any kind of different pressure to respond with a Barack Obama than you did with a George Bush, given that Canadians – and maybe this is an advantage – given that Canadians like Barack Obama.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, first of all, I start with two principles when it comes to our relationship with the United States. The first is that the first priority of the government of Canada, the Canadian Prime Minister, is obviously to determine Canada's basic interests and values, and that's what we do. But the other is regardless of the partisanship of our government or the partisanship of the American government, the United States is our...not just our closest neighbour, but our best friend and ally, and we are there to try and be helpful. I, you know, have established an improved relationship with President Bush, certainly improved from our predecessors, which I think was beneficial to Canada, even though we were sometimes criticized for it, and we will do everything to maintain a good, solid, helpful relationship with the United States while not compromising our basic interests.

ERIC SORENSEN: Is there any one thing you can point to that has changed with the changing administration, or the one thing that you think Canada might be able to do more now?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, the biggest change is we're starting on a fresh foot. Although we had improved the relationship between the government of Canada and the American

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administration, the fact is there was an awful lot of water under the bridge when I came to office. President Bush was already well into his second term, and it was hard to recalibrate the relationship or to change it significantly at that point. Certainly undoing things like the different direction the United States had established after 9/11 and after the Iraq war and things like that, the HTI you asked me about, that was, you know, at that point, next to impossible. But we are now starting on a fresh foot with a new administration. So far it has gone very well. I had very good meetings with President Obama. We've established some important joint working relationships, whether it's on the border or whether it's on the auto sector, on the financial sector, on the environment. We established some very important dialogues. We've had no less than eight ministerial visits to Washington to meet...my ministers, to meet their American counterparts since President Obama visited Canada, so we are really able to build this relationship from the ground up and I think that's going to make a tremendous difference.

ERIC SORENSEN: Two days in meetings with American media heading in to G20 and NATO; what is the one thing you would want to take hold here as you head out to those meetings?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, you know, the first thing we want to do, if I can be blunt about it, Eric, is we really do want to capitalize on the good...the good press, the good image Canada has been receiving in the US and around the world. We're seen as solid and reliable allies in Afghanistan. We're somebody everybody's looking to as an example in terms of the banking and financial sector crisis. We, you know, we continue to be a bridge builder in terms of a lot of the conflicts that exist between our allies. So you know, we really want to...we really want to get out

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there, emphasize the strengths of our country, but also make sure we're getting our core messages out, particularly on the global economy, on the necessity of tackling financial regulation, avoiding protectionism. We have a global economy with a global problem, and therefore we need global solutions, and therefore the Prime Minister of Canada has to communicate in this age as much globally as we do nationally.

ERIC SORENSEN: I think we're out of time. It's just, you know, I did just want to ask you, because there are still misperceptions in the US towards Canada at times. Some...on a particular TV show they were mocking the Canadian media. I found that shocking.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, look, as you know, we strongly condemned that particular show, but I think we have to admit, the comments were appallingly ignorant and insulting. That said, we have to put into perspective, this was a three a.m. comedy show. I just appeared on Fox News Sunday, Fox News' flagship program, and certainly all the hosts on that show were more than aware of Canada's solid contribution, both in terms of the economy and in terms of international peace and security. So you know, I actually think we're probably better known, better appreciated right about now in the United States than at any point in history. But we will...and I think this is an important thing for Canadians to understand: we will...we will build on that by finding common ground and by being a valuable ally and contributor to our friends south of the border, not a critic, not someone that...not a country that focuses on, you know, individual and small grievances. We need to keep a big picture focus and look where we can be helpful, and I think it has and will pay dividends for the country.

ERIC SORENSEN: Thank you.

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Thanks Eric.

ERIC SORENSEN: Appreciate it. I can vouch for that, because of course, I watch the cable news here a lot, and those that are more in the know increasingly, when you talk about Afghanistan, and they've been talking about Afghanistan...

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