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PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT TÊT EVENT

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(APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. Thank you very much. First of all, I want to thank the Senator for that introduction. You know, since he's arrived on Canada's shores, Senator Noh has used his experiences and applied his talents. He's been a champion for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. He's served his country in many capacities, as a teacher, as a judge, and now he is the first person ever from the Canadian-Vietnamese community to serve in the Senate of Canada. Give Senator Noh a big hand. (APPLAUSE) Now, I know, friends, they were already introduced, but I do want to point out today, we have a very large delegation who's come to join you from the Parliament of Canada, a number of Ministers, of Senators, Members of Parliament. I know they've been introduced, but all, stand up one more time to give them a big hand. (APPLAUSE) I'm really here for one reason.

Je suis ici pour dire bonne année.

I'm here to say happy New Year. *Chúc Mừng Năm Mới*. (APPLAUSE) Ladies and gentlemen, the Tết festival is always a time to gather with family and friends, and to reflect on the year past. I just want to begin by congratulating the organization here who has put this on. I gather that this has gone on for almost 30 years. It is hosted by the Vietnamese Association of Toronto. It is a wonderful event. I'm told it uses almost 500 volunteers, so give a big hand of congratulations to all those volunteers and the organizers of this wonderful celebration. (APPLAUSE) As I say, this is an important time to be with family and friends, an important time to appreciate the wonderful country

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we call Canada. Canada is the greatest country in the world, friends, for so many reasons.

Entre autres, il s'agit de la diversité culturelle qui caractérise l'ensemble de ce vaste territoire, et dont la communauté vietnamienne est un élément essentiel.

One of those, of course, being the great cultural diversity of this country, of which Canada's Vietnamese community, which has grown from very modest roots in just a few decades to being now close to 300,000 people from one end of the country to another, successful in almost every area, and we are so proud that Canada's Vietnamese community is part of this great country. (APPLAUSE) Please know that in choosing this country, you have enriched it with your talents, your skills and your determination, as your parents have done, and as I know your children are going to do also. And let me tell you that just as you have come here to contribute to this country, we will continue to build relations with the country of Vietnam through immigration, through accepting students and education, through trade and through building prosperity. But let me also assure you that as we engage in Vietnam front and centre in our relationship will always be not only the furtherance of peace and prosperity, but also freedom, democracy and human rights for the people of Vietnam. (APPLAUSE) Thank you again for having me. You are making our country stronger and more prosperous, and it is also my hope that in the coming year, the Year of the Snake, you will have good health. Your family, your community, all of you, I wish you good health, continued success and much happiness. Merci beaucoup, happy New Year, *Chúc Mừng Năm Mới*. (APPLAUSE)

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