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PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH IN KUUJJUAQ

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(APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Good morning ladies and gentlemen, bonjour mesdames et messieurs. (Inaudible). Don't know if I got it right. (LAUGHTER) Greetings first of all to all of you. Greeting to Mayor Watt, to our bishop, to Grand Chief McCash, distinguished elders, guests. First of all thank you, Chuck, for that introduction and also thank you for the hard work that I know you've done and also all of your staff at Indian and Northern Affairs have done to make this historic event today possible. Greetings as well to my friend and our Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon who also deserves praise for his work on the outstanding new terminal at the Kuujuaq airport, which I understand we will be officially inaugurating a little bit later today. Colleagues, thank you, both of you for coming up with me today. And special greetings to Pita Aatami, head of the Makivik Corporation. Reader's Digest, as you all know, named Pita one of Canada's heroes of 2007, a title that was earned by virtue of his role as a tireless fighter for the people of Nunavik, so we're delighted to have you here as well.

Mesdames et messieurs, c'est un grand plaisir pour moi d'être ici aujourd'hui à Kuujuaq pour cette célébration de l'accord sur les revendications territoriales des Inuits de Nunavik.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be here today in Kuujuaq for the celebration of the historic Nunavik Inuit land claims agreement. As you know the government has made the North one of our highest priorities.

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Notre stratégie pour le Nord repose sur quatre piliers, affirmer la souveraineté du Canada dans l'Arctique, stimuler le développement sociale et économique dans toute la région, protéger le fragile environnement nordique et donner aux habitants du Nord, aux nordiques un plus grand contrôle de leur propre destin.

Our Northern strategy rests on four planks: asserting Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic, boosting social and economic development throughout the region, protecting the fragile Northern environment and providing Northerners with more control over their own destiny. That's why I've toured the North so extensively in the last two years. These trips help remind Southern Canadians how important the North is to Canada's future, and they tell Northerners that our government sees them as full partners in our federation. Earlier this month, in fact, I was in Yellowknife to announce several new Northern initiatives contained in budget 2008. One of those is of course the increase in the tax deduction for Northern residents, including the residents of Kuujjuaq. This will mean, as some of you know, an increase in the maximum residency deduction of nearly \$550 a year. I also attended the opening of the Arctic Winter Games in Yellowknife and had my first go at dog sledding. I felt pretty good about it. I certainly enjoyed it, but I have to tell you, I'll leave the Ivakkak race in the Ungava Peninsula to the professionals in the future.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, several years ago my wife Laureen was in Kuujjuaq, but this is actually my first trip to the Ungava Peninsula. I've been over this country of course by air many, many times, but this is the first time I've actually put my feet on the ground. I'm told it's actually the first time a sitting Prime Minister has been in Kuujjuaq. Indeed,

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as I've seen with all my northern trips, this is a spectacular environment. The unspoiled beauty of this region immediately strikes anyone, and it is frankly... the unspoiled beauty is matched only by the extraordinary opportunities that lay before the people who live here.

Les 10 000 Inuits des 15 communautés de la côte de la Baie d'Ungava et de la côte est de la Baie d'Hudson vivent sur des terres qui ont un immense potentiel. Riches en ressources et bénis par d'immenses populations de poissons et d'animaux sauvages, le Nunavik et son peuple ont des possibilités infinies en ce qui a trait aux mines, au (inaudible), au tourisme, au pêche et plus encore. Notre gouvernement est déterminé à assurer que les gens qui vivent, travaille et élèvent leurs familles ici peuvent profiter pleinement de ces possibilités. Et j'ai le grand plaisir de dire que nous avons fait un grand pas dans cette direction le mois dernier quand l'accord sur les revendications territoriales des Inuits de Nunavik a finalement reçu la sanction royale et a maintenant force de loi.

The 10 000 Inuit who live in 15 communities along the coast of Ungava Bay and the eastern shore of Hudson Bay inhabit a land of enormous potential. Rich in resources and blessed with thriving fish and wildlife populations, there are countless opportunities ahead for Nunavik and its people, in mining and outfitting, tourism, fishing and much more. Our government is committed to making sure the people who live, work and raise their families here can make the most of these opportunities. And I'm very pleased to say that we took a huge step in this direction last month when the Nunavik Inuit land claims agreement finally received royal assent and passed into law. This milestone hails the dawn of a new era for the people of Nunavik, an era of greater self-determination, greater self-sufficiency and self-

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assurance within our united country. The agreement is also a tribute to your patience and tenacity. I understand it took 30 years to bring it to fruition and I'm proud to be able to say that our government and our ministers did finally come through for you. Now, the Nunavik Inuit have clearly...now in this agreement the Nunavik Inuit have clearly defined and constitutionally protected land and resource ownership rights within the vast Nunavik marine region, plus joint ownership with the Cree have designated lands on Hudson Bay, plus commercial fishing and plant gathering rights off the shores of Labrador, and harvesting rights with the spectacular Torngat Mountains National Reserve in Labrador, which will be formally recognized as a national park.

Il est difficile de surestimer les avantages liés au règlement de la revendication territoriale. D'abord et avant tout, ce règlement reconnaît que les Inuits de Nunavik possèdent une région qui est occupé par leurs ancêtres depuis des milliers d'années. Deuxièmement, en réglant le problème de la propriété des terres et des droits d'utilisation des ressources, il crée un environnement stable pour les investissements et le développement. Cela se traduira par de nouveaux emplois et de nouvelles possibilités d'affaires pour les résidents locaux. Troisièmement, il offre une nouvelle source de revenu avec les redevances sur les ressources pour la société Makivik et la société pourra mettre à profit son esprit d'entreprise déjà fort impressionnant.

It is hard to overstate the benefits associated with the resolution of the land claim. First and foremost, it recognizes Nunavik Inuit ownership in a region that has been occupied by your ancestors for thousands of years. Second, by resolving the issue of land ownership and resource rights, it creates a stable environment for investment and development that will mean

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new jobs and business opportunities for local residents. Third, it provides a new resource royalty revenue stream for the Makivik Corporation so it can build on its already impressive record of entrepreneurship. Air Inuit, First Air and Cruise North expeditions are just a few of its enterprises, and through a variety of joint ventures, it is also engaged in commercial fishing, shipping, investment and scientific research. As I said, the Nunavik Inuit land claim agreement is a big step forward for social and economic development in this region.

Mais il reste la dernière étape de ce processus, l'autonomie gouvernementale du Nunavik. Notre gouvernement conservateur croit fermement que le meilleur gouvernement qui soit est souvent celui qui est le plus près des citoyens, des citoyennes qu'il gouverne, et c'est pourquoi nous nous engageons à assurer l'autonomie gouvernementale pour la population de cette région.

Still ahead is the final step in this process: regional self-government for Nunavik. Our Conservative government believes fundamentally that the best government is often that which is closest to the governed, and that's why we are committed to delivering self-government for the people of this region. Once again, I must salute Minister Strahl for his efforts on this file working closely with community leaders here and with the government of Quebec. We achieved an agreement in principal to establish a Nunavik regional government and assembly in December. The agreement sets the stage for Aboriginal self-government in this region and I understand everything is going along on the track to get done on schedule. It will give all Nunavik people a say in how their children are educated, how their health is protected and how their public infrastructure is developed, and it will

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complement the goals of the land claim agreement that we're celebrating here today by giving the Nunavik Inuit even more control over their social and economic destiny.

Permettez-moi, mesdames et messieurs, de conclure en disant que le règlement de la revendication territoriale et la progression vers l'autonomie gouvernementale ne sont pas seulement bénéfiques aux Inuits de Nunavik, mais à tout le Canada. Le destin de notre pays est étroitement lié au Grand Nord, et il est primordial que les gens qui vivent ici soient reconnus et appréciés comme étant les gens qui jouent un rôle crucial dans la détermination de ce destin.

Let me just conclude by saying that resolving the land claim and moving forward towards self-government is not just good for the Inuit of Nunavik. It is good for all of Canada. The destiny of our country is inextricably tied to the True North. It is critical that the people who live here are recognized and appreciated as the people who will play a key role in shaping that destiny. We need healthy, prosperous, stable communities all across the North. That's how we'll best achieve our national goals of protecting our sovereignty over the Arctic, of developing our Northern resources and of protecting our precious Northern environment. Working together we are already making great progress towards these goals, and working together we are leading the way toward a stronger, safer and better Canada for all of us. Thank you for coming out today, merci beaucoup, *nakumik* (inaudible). (APPLAUSE)

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