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**PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT CHINESE CANADIAN**  
**ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS DINNER**

(MUSIC, APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada):

Well, good evening, thank you very much head table guests, honoured guests, award winners, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, good evening and thank you for that warm welcome. (Speaking Chinese) (APPLAUSE) I'm told next year I should probably do Cantonese instead. It's a great honour to be with you this evening for the tenth annual Chinese Entrepreneurial Awards.

C'est un grand honneur d'être parmi vous ce soir pour les dixièmes prix annuels pour les Entrepreneurs canadiens-chinois.

Before I begin this evening I'd like to take a moment to thank and congratulate the Association of Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurs for organizing this tremendous gala dinner this evening. In just over a decade, the ACCE has developed into a prominent and leading organization in Toronto's business community. Through organizing seminars for business people and entrepreneurs, the ACCE has made great strides in pursuing its stated mission, its stated mission of encouraging new business start-ups, promoting social responsibility in entrepreneurs and recognizing the contribution of Chinese-Canadian entrepreneurs. This organization has done an outstanding job over the years and should be proud of all it has accomplished.

Now, tonight we celebrate the entrepreneurial achievements of the Chinese-Canadian community. It's not secret that Chinese people are famous the world over for their work ethic. In each and every community in which Chinese people have settled, there's been great benefit as a result of the hard work and entrepreneurial spirit that they've brought. Canada is no exception. As you know, the Chinese presence in Canada predates Confederation. Chinese gold

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miners, attracted by the rumours of gold in the Fraser Valley area left San Francisco for British Columbia as early as the 1850s. These adventurous Chinese were soon joined by others who would leave their families to pursue economic opportunities in a country halfway around the world. Almost exclusively male, these individuals worked hard in order to provide a better quality of life for their families back home. Many thousands of them soon participated in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. This project was probably the most important nation building enterprise in Canadian history. As Canada's first transcontinental railway, it bound our fledgling country together, and it could not have been accomplished without the contribution of Chinese labourers who sacrificed greatly, including even the sacrifice of their own lives at times to make it a reality. Now as you know, working conditions at the time, on the railway and elsewhere, were often very, very harsh. But these individuals persevered, and they eventually built what would become Canada's iron backbone. In the years that followed, these and other Chinese immigrants spread throughout the country and opened small commercial enterprises like restaurants, laundries and corner stores. These small businesses became integral institutions in the communities they served. In accordance with the Chinese commitment to strong families, these men and women worked hard to provide better lives for their children, and through a combination of dedicated effort and educational achievement, their children and grandchildren would go on to achieve a level of success that could not even have been dreamt of when their ancestors arrived here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Simply put, Canada would not be the country it is today without these contributions.

But let us not forget the contributions that have been made by more recent Chinese immigrants. From especially the 1980s on, Canada has been the beneficiary of waves of immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland

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China who have made their own special contribution to the communities in which they've settled. This contribution is particularly noteworthy in the Greater Toronto and Greater Vancouver Areas. Here in Greater Toronto, in Markham, similar communities, men and women like yourselves have helped to make Canada's largest city and important economic centre whose impact is felt throughout the world. And Vancouver has now become not just Canada's, but North America's gateway for Asia-Pacific trade, largely because of the presence of large numbers of Chinese Canadians. In other words, in your capacities as presidents and CEOs, as small and medium sized business owners, you are the men and women who are helping to fuel Canada's economic engine and to propel our country forward on the international stage. On behalf of Canada's new national government, I would like to thank not just those of you who will receive well-deserved awards tonight, but all of you for the important contributions you make to our country on a daily basis.

Canada is not just economically stronger because of your efforts, but culturally stronger too. It is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan and confident about its place on the world stage, in no small measure due to your efforts. Now this brings me to an issue of particular importance to our new national government, which of course Catherine mentioned briefly, and that's addressing the historical wrongs of the Chinese head tax and the Exclusion Act. My party has long recognized the grave injustice of these past discriminatory measures. Now as government, we are going to act on that belief. As promised in the recent Speech from the Throne, our government will move in Parliament to offer a formal apology for the Chinese head tax. (APPLAUSE) Thank you very much. We will be consulting with the Chinese-Canadian community to establish a consensus for further recognition and reconciliation of this sad period in our history. Chinese-Canadians have made, as I said earlier, an invaluable contribution

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to Canada, and your community deserves nothing less than a full apology for this past wrong. Our government will always be mindful of the integral role played by Chinese-Canadians in Canadian society, and in turn will always afford this community the respect to which it is entitled.

Now, in closing I would like once again to thank you for your invitation to this evening's event, and to extend my congratulations to tonight's award recipients. I have no doubt that the entrepreneurial contributions of Chinese-Canadians will only increase in the years that lie ahead. Merci beaucoup! Xie xie! Thank you very much.

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