

## **H & K Communications**

72 Elvaston Avenue  
Nepean, Ontario  
K2G 3X9

Phone: (613) 829-1800  
Fax: (613) 829-2449  
E-mail: hturkow@rogers.com

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### **PRIME MINISTER'S MEDIA AVAILABILITY IN SLAVE LAKE**

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Well, look, we...as you know, earlier we had an aerial tour and saw the damage. You know, first of all, I just want to say really, the reason I'm here, just to tell everybody that people who've lost their homes here, businesses, people are being thought about all across the country. It's a terrible thing to happen to...when that occurs. There's nothing worse than being without your own home, and it's a terrible tragedy, and we just want to say that everybody's in thoughts and prayers here all across the country. This has had a lot of attention nationally, and I know there's people who have come in from all around the country to help as well.

I will say a couple of things. You know, I think we do have to look on the bright side of some of this. It's a miracle that no one...there appears to be no loss of life. It's also a miracle when you see the extent of the damage from the air, it's actually a miracle how few buildings were actually destroyed, considering how bad it really could have been. So I know there's a lot of tough rebuilding to be done, and we're going to be obviously talking about all of that, and I just want to, through the Premier and through the mayor, congratulate them for their efforts, and through them, congratulate all of the fire, police, emergency service workers who've come from all over the

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province, and in some cases out-of- province, to help here. There's a lot of rebuilding, a lot of services are still not functioning here, so it's going to be a while, but everybody here is in our thoughts and prayers.

ED STELMACH (Premier of Alberta): I just want to take the opportunity, on behalf of (inaudible), the MLA for the area, and also to have our Member of Parliament here to meet the Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister said, we did an aerial tour, a good view of what has happened here on Sunday. We talked about the recovery plan, and this is going to be long-term. Prime Minister will be taking additional information back with him in terms of not only the recovery plan, but some of the unique circumstances that we have in this province, you know, related to temporary workers, re-establishing health services, education services, etcetera. So I just want to thank you, Prime Minister, for coming, and I also want to thank the mayor, and I know our reeve isn't here, Denny, but they've really worked tirelessly over this past week, and to all of the firefighters, all of the first response teams from every community, the RCMP, the sheriffs, everyone that has come and work together this past week, we've moved the goalposts phenomenally this week. We have a lot to do in terms of recovery and before people come back to the community, but I just want to thank you, your Worship, and to the reeve, and also to all levels of government that worked closely together.

REPORTER: Mr. Prime Minister, I know that there was a release that came out that said the government is working to provide assistance through supplies, etcetera. We know provincially that part of the \$50 million is rolling out today. Is there any discussion about financial assistance coming from the federal government?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: The federal government's financial assistance is determined by what's called the Disaster Financial Assistance Act. There's a formula that applies to all kinds of emergencies across the country, so that's what will be our contribution in this

case. We're not in a position today to estimate what that amount of dollars will be, but obviously it will be substantial. I should just say the two other things that involve the federal government, as the Premier mentioned, Brian Jean, our member, has been focused particularly on federal temporary workers, because in many cases they've lost both their employment and their homes. There's going to have to be some special measures to take care of some of those people, so we're working with them at the various accommodation areas. Also, I've indicated to Premier, you know, if we have any...if there's anything we can offer in terms of emergency assistance, we do have emergency assistance teams, federal teams who are up here from Calgary, and there's also certain supplies that we've been able to help provide the province, but we stand ready to give any other assistance if that's necessary.

JOURNALISTE : Monsieur Harper, en français...

REPORTER: (Inaudible) has asked for some flexibility in the disaster act, the disaster assistance act. Are you prepared to discuss any flexibility with that, or is it just going to be the straight formula being applied?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, you know, the reason we have the Disaster Financial Assistance Act is so the federal government's support across the country is equitable to all communities and all regions in these cases. We always examine whether these arrangements are adequate, but I think it's a bit premature without knowing the scale of the claims that are going to be made under that act.

Je peux dire quelque chose en français. Nous sommes ici pour évidemment pour supporter la communauté. Nous avons une formule au niveau fédéral déterminée par la loi sur les désastres, et évidemment c'est pas possible d'estimer aujourd'hui les montants, mais ils seront substantiels. Nous sommes ici aussi pour aider la situation des immigrants, des travailleurs temporaires fédéraux qui ont perdu leurs maisons, leurs emplois, et nous sommes ici pour régler ce problème aussi. Et comme j'ai indiqué au Premier

ministre de l'Alberta à plusieurs reprises, que nous sommes toujours prêts à donner de l'aide si c'est nécessaire, si nous avons des capacités.

JOURNALISTE : Concrètement, qu'est-ce que ça représente, cette aide du gouvernement fédéral?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Nous avons, comme je viens de mentionner, il y a une équipe d'urgence qui est ici de Calgary sur les logistiques, par exemple, et nous avons...c'est un autre approvisionnement que nous avons déjà donné et nous pouvons continuer à donner.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, what would your message be to those who are going to be in evacuation shelters for a couple of weeks now? What do you say to them?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, look, we just say that we know it's very tough. You know, there is nothing tougher. I know my wife, when she was younger, they lost their home on an occasion. There's nothing tougher for any people, than not having any place to call your own, and we understand...we understand that that's very tough, and there are people thinking and praying for them all across the country. I also know that their municipal officials, their provincial officials, those who are charged with getting services back up and running, with containing the disasters, are really working hard. So you know, we just ask everybody to work together, be patient, and we're thinking of them.

JOURNALISTE : (Inaudible).

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Pour les gens, c'est terrible quand on perd sa propre maison, et c'est toujours...c'est quelque chose qui s'est passé à ma femme quand elle était jeune. C'est une expérience terrible. Nos pensées et nos prières sont avec eux. Je peux les assurer que tous les fonctionnaires, tous les services d'urgence travaillent ici pour minimiser les dommages, pour établir, rétablir les services essentiels, et pour aider des

personnes qui sont déplacées, mais nos pensées, nos prières sont avec toutes ces familles.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thanks very much, everyone.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Ok, thanks everyone.

UNIDENTIFIED: Premier Stelmach will be available just  
(inaudible)...

1308 words

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