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P.M. HARPER'S SPEECH TO CPPA AT CHÂTEAU LAURIER

STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Well, thank you very much, Tony, thank you, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to join you today. It is a great honour for me to be in the company of the professional men and women who are dedicated to keeping our streets and our neighbourhoods safe for families right across this country.

En tant que représentants nationaux des agentes et agents de police au Canada, vous êtes les premiers à constater les conséquences graves de l'augmentation des crimes liés aux armes de poings, aux gangs et aux drogues.

Now, as we all know, Canada's a great country. One of the things that has made it a great country is our traditionally low rates of crime. In fact, our peaceful, law-abiding communities are part of Canada's traditional identity and values. But times have been changing, our cities have been changing and the safe streets and safe neighbourhoods that Canadians have come to expect as part of our way of life are threatened by rising levels of crime.

Le crime des drogues est en hausse. Le crime des gangs est en hausse et le taux d'homicides est aussi en hausse.

In the last few months and years, we have witnessed growing media reports of drug, gang and gun violence, especially but not limited to the City of Toronto. These incidents appear no longer limited to supposedly bad neighbourhoods but they have occurred in downtown centres frequented by families, workers, students, and tourists. Now clearly, my friends, this cannot go on. If we are to protect our Canadian way of life, we need to crack down on gun, gang and drug crime. Canadians are tired of talk, they want action and they want it now. And that's what Canada's new government is going to do: take action.

Premièrement, nous allons tenir les criminels responsables de leurs actions. Nous allons établir des peines minimales obligatoires pour des crimes sérieux, violents et répétitifs.

We are going to hold criminals to account. This means making sure sentences match the severity of crimes and getting violent criminals off the streets so they cannot re-offend? This government will send a strong message to criminals. If you do a serious crime, you're going to start doing serious time.

(applause)

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That's why during our mandate, and hopefully with the help of some of the opposition, we'll take the following actions. We'll introduce mandatory minimum prison sentences for drug traffickers, weapons offences, repeat offenders and crimes committed while on parole. We'll end conditional sentences for serious crimes. We'll repeal the faint hope clause and we'll...

(applause)

I thought we might find a receptive audience.

(laughter)

And we'll replace statutory release with earned parole.

Les libérations conditionnelles ne seront plus accordées automatiquement, comme c'est souvent le cas à l'heure actuelle. La libération conditionnelle est un privilège et elle doit être méritée.

Holding criminals to account will require more police officers. That's why we're also going to work with our partners and other levels of government to make sure there are more police officers on the streets.

C'est une importance vitale puisque nombre de corps policiers sont actuellement sous financés et débordés. Cet état de choses a eu des conséquences graves sur la sécurité publique. Le manque de patrouilles policières mène invariablement à une croissance des crimes et de leur gravité.

Canadians have told us these are things they can't live with. So we're going to act. We're going to establish a new cost-shared program with provincial and municipal governments to hire new police officers. We'll reinvest savings from the long gun registry into frontline law enforcement.

Et nous aurons l'investissement de nouvel argent fédéral pour les priorités de justice criminelle incluant les programmes pour les jeunes à risque.

Now, when it comes to drugs, I know that your organisation, officers across the country and parents agree, we don't need more of them on our streets.

Cette augmentation de la production et de la distribution des drogues dures a déjà été bien documentée et si nous légalisons les drogues comme la marijuana, il sera plus facile pour nos enfants de s'en procurer. C'est pourquoi mon gouvernement s'oppose à la légalisation des drogues, en particulier à cause du tort qu'elles peuvent causer à nos villes et nos communautés par un accroissement de la dépendance et des crimes.

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Instead, we'll work to get drugs off the streets, away from our children, and we're going to clean up our communities. We'll do this by ensuring mandatory minimum prison sentences and large fines are given out to marijuana grow op operators and drug dealers. We'll introduce a national drug strategy including a nation-wide awareness campaign to discourage our youth from getting hooked on drugs in the first place. And we will not be reintroducing the Liberal government's marijuana decriminalization legislation.

(applause)

Enfin, nous allons durcir le temps avec les délinquants sexuels et ceux qui s'en prennent à nos enfants.

We're also going to get tough on sex offenders by creating an effective DNA bank of all convicted sex offenders and dangerous offenders. We'll be raising the age of consent for sexual relations between children and adults from 14 to 16 years of age and we'll be establishing a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of child pornography.

Now, friends, Canadians have told us they want our government to protect the way of life that has made this country such a great place to live. They've told us they want to be able to go about their daily lives without having to worry about getting hit by a stray bullet fired by a gang member or being killed by a street racer losing control of his stolen vehicle.

Ils nous ont dit qu'ils veulent s'attaquer aux problèmes de la criminalité pour vrai et ils veulent mettre un terme à la violence liée aux gangs, aux armes de poing et aux drogues. Ils veulent des actions, pas d'autres belles paroles.

Canadians have told us they want action now, not more talk, and that is what we are going to do, working closely with organisations such as yours. By working together, we can tackle violent crime and make our streets safer; and we will.

In closing, I want to thank you for your kind attention. More importantly, I want to thank you for the invaluable work that you and your colleagues do, your invaluable and often dangerous work that you do on behalf of all of us.

I wish you well in your deliberations and I look forward to working with you in the years and months, months and years ahead to make this a stronger and safer country.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup et à la prochaine.

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(applaudissements)

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