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**PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT IN YELLOWKNIFE**

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(APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Merci beaucoup. Bon après-midi. Good afternoon. Thank you for that very, very warm territorial welcome. I want to begin by offering my sincere thanks to our gracious host today, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Honourable Jackie Jacobson. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for inviting us to use this magnificent building for today's historic announcement.

J'aimerais aussi remercier Bernard pour cette aimable présentation.

I want to also thank Bernard for his kind introduction. And before I go any further, I want to take this opportunity to thank you, Bernard, not just for your many years of service to Canadians; I know we all want to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Canada's new Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Congratulations. (APPLAUSE) My thanks also to today's master of ceremonies. Minister Aglukkaq is very busy. She was just telling me that she first worked as a page in this legislature many, many years ago. She is now Canada's Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, and Minister for the Arctic Council, which Canada chairs this year. Of course, she does all of that on top of representing Nunavut, our geographically largest federal riding by far, in the House of Commons, so we all thank you, Leona, for being here today and for all that you do for Canada's North. (APPLAUSE)

Commissioner Tukeru, Premier McLeod, members of the territorial government and assembly, representatives of aboriginal

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governments, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, mesdames et messieurs.

C'est en fait ma sixième visite à Yellowknife.

This is in fact my sixth time in Yellowknife, a city that so perfectly captures the imagination and the spirit of our North, a booming city, a city with its best days yet to come. I always feel optimistic about Canada's future whenever I visit here, so it really is wonderful to be back. Since becoming Prime Minister in 2006, it's been my privilege to spend a great deal of time North of 60 in cities such as Yellowknife and Whitehorse, Iqaluit and Dawson City, Norman Wells and Cambridge Bay, even up to Alert one year.

Et durant chaque tournée, je remarque les changements concrets qui surviennent en profondeur dans le Grand-Nord canadien.

And during each tour, I note the profound and positive changes taking place across Canada's North, changes that our government has championed, changes that will make a difference in the lives of Northerners, changes that will inspire a generation of Canadians. Ours is the first government in half a century, the first since that of Prime Minister Diefenbaker, to put the North at the top of Canada's agenda, because our government's vision is indeed to see a Canada, a new Canada, a Canada of the North, as Diefenbaker put it all those years ago.

Le Canada est un pays nordique.

Canada is a northern country. We are a northern people. Our North beckons, it challenges, it inspires and as I've said before, the North is Canada's call to greatness.

C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement a mis en place une stratégie pour le Nord du Canada.

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That's why our government created a Northern Strategy built on four pillars: exercising Canada's sovereignty, promoting social and economic development, protecting our environmental heritage, and improving and devolving Northern governance. It's on the last point that we join together today.

Notre gouvernement croit que personne n'est mieux placé pour saisir les opportunités et relever les défis que ceux et celles qui les comprennent le mieux, c'est-à-dire vous qui vivez ici dans les Territoires du Nord-ouest. Chaque fois que cela est possible, vous devriez prendre des décisions au sujet des questions régionales.

Our government believes that the opportunities and challenges here would be better handled by the people who understand them best, that is to say you who live here in the Northwest Territories. Whenever possible you should be making the decisions about regional matters. That, ladies and gentlemen, is what devolution is all about.

Et c'est pourquoi depuis 2006, notre gouvernement fait des négociations sur le transfert des responsabilités et l'autonomie gouvernementale avec les territoires du Canada l'une de nos principales priorités dans le Nord.

That's why since 2006 our government has made advancing devolution and self-government negotiations with Canada's territories one of our key Northern priorities. We need only to look to the West to see how people flourish when they have power over their lives. More than a decade ago, a devolution agreement was signed with Yukon. Since gaining jurisdiction over their lands and resources, Yukon has roared ahead. Unemployment is down, investment is up, and Yukon's economy is stronger

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than ever before. The benefits of devolution have never been more evident, and it is those benefits that our government seeks for the people of the Northwest Territories. Now, not long ago our government passed a significant milestone with the government of the Northwest Territories and representatives of aboriginal regional governments when we reached an agreement in principle to turn over control of lands and resources from Ottawa to the territory.

Depuis que nous avons conclu l'entente de principe sur le transfert des responsabilités liées aux terres et aux ressources des territoires, nous réalisons d'excellents progrès concernant les détails.

Since then, together we made excellent progress on the details. Thus, ladies and gentlemen, I'm very pleased to be here with you on a day that I believe is historic for the people of the Northwest Territories and for all Canadians. Just a moment ago, I witnessed with you the signing of a joint declaration, and I am delighted to therefore announce that the heavy lifting is done, the issues are resolved, and negotiators have reached consensus on the terms of a final devolution agreement. (APPLAUSE) It is indeed a great day. Once fully implemented, friends, this agreement will give the Northwest Territories greater authority and control over crown lands, the power to make resource management decisions for those lands, and also the power to collect royalties from those lands, royalties that will be used to invest in infrastructure projects, in healthcare, and in education, creating jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity in communities across the vast expanse of this territory.

De plus, tel que convenu, notre gouvernement fournira des ressources financières et humaines au gouvernement des territoires du Nord-ouest afin que toute la transition s'effectue sans heurte.

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Furthermore, our government will provide the agreed financial and human resources to the government of the Northwest Territories to ensure that this entire transition will be seamless.

Comme le décrit une entente séparée conclue avec le gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-ouest, et les groupes autochtones participants une partie des revenus tirées des ressources découlant de transferts des responsabilités sera remise aux gouvernements autochtones.

As is described in a separate agreement between the government of the Northwest Territories and participating aboriginal groups, a portion of the resource revenues flowing from devolution will be shared with aboriginal governments. And hear me on this: before this agreement is signed, finally, our government will fulfil our duty to consult with all impacted aboriginal groups. (APPLAUSE) Now, Premier, I know that this agreement has been sought for some years by successive governments of the Northwest Territories. That said, your leadership, perseverance and commitment to the people of the Northwest Territories are a big part of the reason that we are here today, and that devolution is finally crossing the goal line. You should feel very proud, and we all salute your great work. (APPLAUSE)

Now, friends, let me just conclude with a very brief reflection. On the way up here, I had in my possession a book somebody gave me published nearly 50 years ago. It was, in fact, a centennial project, a history of Yellowknife, prepared by a local clergyman, the Reverend Ray Price. At one point, the Reverend Price writes, and I quote, “The Yellowknife of today bears little resemblance to the tiny outpost of civilization of 1935.” That was written in 1967, just as the city was first becoming the territorial capital. Look at Yellowknife now. In that book, Reverend Price also writes, “The silent

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years of the North have gone forever.” How true. The Northwest Territories still has that natural beauty above the ground that we all can see I abundance, but it also has significant riches below, riches that are attracting attention from investors around the world, riches that are making the North a region of infinite promise, riches that are making Northerners and all Canadians optimistic about the future.

Mesdames et messieurs, le temps est venu pour la population des Territoires du Nord-ouest de prendre en main son destin.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is time for the people of the Northwest Territories to take control of its destiny. Some might think of this agreement as the finish line, but we know that what it really is is the beginning of a great new future for the Northwest Territories, for all of the North, and for all of Canada.

Félicitations à tous et à toutes.

Congratulations one and all. Thanks for having me here today. (APPLAUSE)

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(1539 words)

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