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**P.M. ANNOUNCEMENT IN INUVIK, NWT**

RT. HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER (Canadian Prime Minister): Thank you very much, Ryan, for that kind introduction. Thank you to all of my colleagues who are here today, to Dennis, former premier, to Mark. Also let me just say as well regrets of Leona. I know how badly she wanted to be here and it's kind of ironic that it's winter weather down south keeping her away today. But these things happen.

Premier McLeod, delighted. This is the government of this territory has been a great partner in all this and will be of course the lead on the contracting going forward. So it's in your hands from here.

Look, I could go through so many people. All the mayors, former premier Floyd. Roland Floyd and I, I think it was Floyd, when Floyd was premier that we first discussed doing this. Nasogaluak, Darrel, the mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, great to have you here, as well as previous mayors. Denny Rodgers, Mervin Gruben. I know Mervin and I talked about this many years ago. Nelly Robert, thank you for your kind words. I really appreciate it.

I could go through the list here. I'm increasingly noticing as I come up here, I recognize more and more people. I think that one day in the Legislation back in the spring, I recognize almost every single individual present. But it's great to have so many people here from the communities, all the way from elders to our students who have joined us today.

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And it's great to have such a warm welcome on such a cold day.

A special delight to be in Inuvik once again. This is, I was just checking, my third visit here. They've all been great. This is the first winter one. When Prime Minister Diefenbaker, the first Prime Minister to visit here, he did so in 1961. He said that Inuvik was, and I quote: "A place for which there is no counterpart in Canada."

And I have been, I can tell you, about as far north, southeast and west as you can possibly go in this country and, friends, I think that Diefenbaker did get it exactly right.

I am delighted to be here, delighted to be with all of you.

Mesdames et Messieurs, chers amis, aujourd'hui est un grand jour. C'est un jour de célébrations. Aujourd'hui le passé et l'avenir se rejoignent d'une façon vraiment remarquable.

Today we are building on the dreams not just of many of you, all of you, I'm sure, but also on two of our country's long departed great visionary leaders. Long departed but never forgotten. First, Sir John A. Macdonald, who of course built the Canadian Pacific Railway to that illustrious band of steel that stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and bound the country together, the new Dominion. And second, John Diefenbaker, who years later would build on Macdonald's vision. But instead of east or west, he looked north and instead of a railway, he built roads. Those famous roads to resources that would link northern communities to those in the south.

The centrepiece of Diefenbaker's roads to resources program was the Dempster Highway. Since construction ended more than 35 years ago, the Dempster has become a vital transportation corridor, not just for this community

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but for many Canadians, both north and south. It is used by adventure seekers and outdoor enthusiasts, by resource companies transporting machinery, minerals and manpower, by hearty ice truckers who drive in supplies needed to sustain northern communities for months at a time, and of course it's used by northern families, by the men and women who rely on the highway to get them safely to work and back to their homes and to their families.

Inuvik has long been as you all know the last stop on the Dempster Highway. But, friends, as many of you have told me, that was never the intention. The highway that Diefenbaker envisioned was to wind all the way to the Arctic Ocean. Thus the road, the dream has been incomplete. Now many of you will know that during the last election in 2011, I told Canadians we announced officially that if elected our government would complete the Dempster Highway, that we would finally extend the road all the way to Tuktoyaktuk, that we would invest through our Economic Action Plan in the very first year-round link between the Arctic Ocean and the rest of the country.

And obviously I'm here today to announce that we are doing exactly that.

C'est aujourd'hui la pelletée de terre officielle en vue de la construction du dernier tronçon de la route Dempster, la dernière étape devant mener à la réalisation complète du rêve de Macdonald et de Diefenbaker.

Le rêve de voir tous les Canadiens relier d'un océan aux autres, de l'Atlantique au Pacifique, en passant par l'Arctique.

Today marks the official ground-breaking. We've debated what to call it because we don't actually break the ground here, though everybody who knows about the construction methods. But today does mark that, the official launch of the construction of the final leg of the Dempster Highway, the last step in

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completing the dream of Macdonald and Diefenbaker, the dream to see all Canadians linked from coast to coast to coast, all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and to the Arctic Ocean.

(applause)

A great day. So this country will be truly linked, linked not only by vision and purpose but linked also by infrastructure. And what a remarkable piece of infrastructure it will be. Anyone who knows anything about the north knows that projects here require careful design and building methods to insulate the permafrost.

When construction wraps up in about four years, the Dempster Highway will be a more effective connection in the transportation network linking northern resources to southern markets. And linking northerners to quality, well paying jobs including of course the hundreds – actually, I’m told about 2,000 over the ... over the length of the project – about 2,000 jobs that will be created during construction.

It will also link lower cost supplies and materials from the south to northern families. In fact studies have shown that this extension will significantly cut the cost of living in Tuktoyaktuk and help boost the local economy.

Une fois terminée, cette route permettra de transporter des ressources, des gens et la prospérité aujourd’hui, demain et pour les générations à venir.

When complete the highway will transport resources, people and prosperity today, tomorrow and for the many generations to come.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, before I wrap up, there is one chapter in the Dempster story that I’d be remiss if I did not mention. A little bit

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about the history. This highway approximately follows a patrol route once used by the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, the predecessors of the RCMP. It was a treacherous passage at the best of times and lethal during the worst. More than 100 years ago, a four-man team destined, a four-man patrol team destined for Fort McPherson went missing along the route. And that was about as far north as the authorities went in those days.

The team dispatched to locate the lost party was led by a corporal, later Inspector William Dempster, known as the man of the iron trail. Inspector Dempster patrolled the hundreds of kilometres of wilderness between Dawson City and Fort McPherson. And despite the fact that he located the lost patrol in record time, exhaustion and starvation had already claimed all four lives.

De nombreuses années plus tard il a été décidé que cette route servirait à tout jamais de monument à la mémoire de l'inspecteur Dempster et de la police à cheval du Nord-ouest.

Many years later it was decided that the road should forever serve as a monument to Inspector Dempster, that it would be an enduring reminder of his leadership, bravery and many, many years of faithful public service.

So, friends, this highway not only completes the dream of Prime Ministers Macdonald and Diefenbaker, it also helps ensure that Inspector Dempster's life work, that is opening Canada's northern frontier, serving northerners in remote communities, and defending Canada's northern sovereignty, that his life's work as embodied in our government's own northern strategy will continue for years to come.

Now I've already told the Premier that when the road is complete, I'm going to come back to try it out. I might even break the speed limit. Well, I'm looking forward to that day.

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Chers amis, l'avenir du nord, l'avenir du Canada s'avère en effet très prometteur.

Friends, this should remind us all that these are very exciting times. They're exciting times and they are hopeful times for northerners and for all Canadians. And I want to congratulate every one of you here on this historic day and just tell you what an honour and what a great thrill it is to be here for this.

Thank you.

(applause)

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