

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 AFTER ELECTION
DAY**

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Phone (613) 829-1800 Fax (613) 829-6181 E-mail hturkow@home.com

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Bon matin. Good morning. I'm just going to take a few questions. We have a long journey back, as you know.

MODERATOR: Terry Milewski, CBC News.

REPORTER: Thank you. Good morning, sir. We won't make a habit of this, but congratulations may be in order. (LAUGHTER)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Thank you, Terry. (LAUGHTER)

REPORTER: Last night in your victory speech, you said that you would keep your promise of six percent annual increases for healthcare. Two questions on that. The first is, you haven't really specified how long that's good for, and second, you haven't said whether that's a blank cheque. Canadians know that you've been for many years an advocate of more private delivery in the healthcare system, but you've kept that bottled up while you were in a minority. (LAUGHTER) Will you, as a condition of passing over those cheques require provinces, ask provinces, expect them to experiment with more private delivery of healthcare?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: First of all, Terry, I'll just obviously quarrel with the preamble. I think we've made it very clear that we support Canada's system of universal public health insurance. As you know, many provinces have been experimenting with private delivery within that model of public health insurance, which is very different than privatisation of the system. In terms of the six percent, we have made that our planning assumption in our budgets, in our platform, going forward. We did say in the platform, and I do repeat, that we do want to sit down with the provinces as we

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renegotiate the health accord to see how we can ensure we get better and clearer results and outcomes for the dollars that we're all spending. This is...and you know, this is a discussion that will be collaborative. I'm not seeking to wave the fingers at provinces. I know that they have an awesome responsibility in delivering the system. They have a lot of challenges, and I think we need to figure out how we can work together so that the increasing amount of money we are going to spend really does get the kind of results we need from the system, and as you know, as much as Canadians value our system, and we all value it, it has challenges, and I think everyone wants to see it perform better. But this is not the question of fundamentals of a universal public system of health insurance. That's what we all believe in in this country.

REPORTER: But private delivery (inaudible)?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, as you know, provinces have within the existing framework experimented with alternative delivery, but that is different than moving away from the basis of a universal system of public health insurance coverage, and we are all committed to that.

Encore, nous sommes tous pour un système de l'assurance santé...d'assurance des soins...l'assurance pour les soins de santé, universel et public. Et évidemment les provinces déjà, ils ont...elles ont...essayé d'autres formes de livraison, mais ça ne change pas la base de notre system, et nous ne changerons pas la base de notre système. Pour les augmentations de six pour cent par année, nous sommes clairs dans notre budget, dans notre plateforme que ça va continuer. Mais pour la renégociation de l'accord, l'entente sur la santé pour 2014, ça va commencer plus tôt que plus tard. C'est essentiel que nous avons une discussion comment on peut assurer l'imputabilité, la

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responsabilité, la bonne utilisation de ces fonds pour assurer des meilleurs résultats. Et c'est une discussion...c'est une discussion coopérative que je veux avec les provinces. Elles ont la responsabilité principale pour ce système. Ce sont elles qui ont les responsabilités de répondre aux grands défis du système. Et nous voulons travailler ensemble de façon, comme je viens de dire, nous collaborons avec les provinces et nous respecterons aussi, je peux mentionner, l'arrangement asymétrique que Québec a déjà établi avec le gouvernement fédéral. Mais on ne va pas...on ne va pas questionner les bases de notre système universel et public.

MODERATOR: Mark Kennedy, Post Media News.

REPORTER: Good morning, Prime Minister. I'm going to try and roll in about three or four themes into one question (LAUGHTER), if I might. So bear with me, please. You'll recall it was a little over a week ago I think in Victoria when we asked you why it was that Canadians should trust you personally when you were seeking their votes, and you talked about Canadians should never give absolute trust to their politicians. You now have the trust of enough Canadians to have the majority that you were asking for. So I guess question number one, or part of the question is how do you earn that trust? How do you convince Canadians that they made the right move last night in looking to you personally as their Prime Minister? And as part of that, you know, you made great gains last night in Toronto, and perhaps without those gains in that city, you wouldn't be where you are today, so how do you convince people in that city that they made the right move? And then there are Canadians who are wondering whether or not you are going to be moving ahead with a radical agenda or whether you'll be looking long-term and

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adopting a more centrist approach. And finally... (LAUGHTER) if you can remember all that...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: It sort of holds together.

REPORTER: I told you it was going to be long. Where are you four years from now? I know it's early to ask the question, but people tend to ask the question, so the question is: is this your last election? (LAUGHTER)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I was going to say, I think Tonda's got it. The next question is "Am I going to resign?". (LAUGHTER) No. I'm going to leave the last question alone. We...we'll concentrate on where we go from here. First of all, you asked me the question. I thought later about my answer. I'm always reluctant to talk a lot about myself. I don't really think that's what people want to see or hear from their Prime Minister. They want to know what he's thinking about them. And so that's my concentration. Look, we're honoured, we're humbled by the mandate we've received from Canadians last night. And my view is, you know, as I think I communicated clearly last night in my speech, we got that mandate because of the way we have governed, because of our record, and Canadians expect us to continue to move forward in the same way, to be true for the platform we've run on, to be true to the kind of values and policies that we've laid out before them. And that's what we will do. And you know, we'll always sit down and see how we improve, but one thing I've learned in this business is that surprises are generally not well received by the public, so you know, we intend to move forward with what Canadians understand about us and I think with what they're more and more comfortable with. In terms of Toronto, you know, what had happened in Toronto, you know, Toronto had always been a

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city, and the Toronto area, with a very strong Conservative presence. Because of the split in the right at the federal level and things that have happened probably at other levels of government as well, by the time I became leader of the opposition, Conservatives, at least federally, and in many other levels, were virtually an extinct species in the city of Toronto. So we'd become alien. Nevertheless, we made significant gains. If you look at every election, you know, even though we hadn't won seats, we've made significant vote gains, started to win more and more seats in the 905 region, so you know, I think in a sense we're building there a natural base for the party, but like...as you say, we will have to govern well, govern in people's interests, and we'll have to continue to earn their trust every day, what every government needs to realise, and I say, you know, you know it well when you're in minority government. You face a, you know, a sense of hanging every day, but even as a majority, you have to, on an ongoing basis, keep the trust of the population, and that's what we will be committed to doing, not only where we won, but in areas where we didn't win, trying to gain more trust.

Alors, pour...comme je viens de dire, ce n'est pas mon habitude de parler sur le sujet de moi. Ce n'est pas ce que la population veut entendre. À mon avis, ils préfèrent que les chefs sont ciblés sur leurs besoins, et c'est ce que nous tentons de faire. Nous sommes bien avec le mandat. Nous avons, évidemment, la confiance d'un grand nombre de Canadiens. Ça a augmenté chaque fois que nous sommes présentés à la population, mais en même temps, c'est nécessaire de continuer à bâtir cette confiance. On ne peut pas...on ne peut déjà prendre la population pour acquis, même dans notre base électoral. C'est la même chose où nous avons fait des gains comme à Toronto, et des autres régions où nous n'avons pas fait des gains, nous avons encore

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travail à faire pour bâtir la confiance de la population. C'est...ça sera notre objectif. Mais comme j'ai dit à...comme j'ai dit hier soir, nous avons un bilan. Nous avons la forme. Et nous avons appris des leçons comme un gouvernement minoritaire, et on doit continuer à agir de la même façon pour continuer à bâtir notre parti et notre gouvernement.

MODÉRATEUR : Daniel Thibeault, Radio-Canada.

JOURNALISTE : Bonjour, Monsieur Harper. Qu'est-ce que vous avez appris exactement comme leçon du Québec? Vous avez encore...vous avez un gouvernement majoritaire, mais sans avoir réussi à obtenir l'appui du Québec. En fait vous avez perdu des sièges là-bas de façon significative. Qu'est-ce que vous avez appris exactement de ce qui s'est passé? Comment vous en voyez les quatre prochaines années là-bas?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Évidemment nous sommes déçus avec les résultats au Québec. Nous avons perdu pas seulement certains de nos députés, nos ministres, nos candidats, mais nous avons perdu des grands Canadiens, des grands Québécois, des hommes et des femmes qui ont grandement contribué à leurs comtés, à leur pays, et c'est une déception pour nous. Mais...et nous ferons toute une analyse de ça. Peut-être ce n'est pas le jour de le faire. Mais en même temps nous avons gagné quelques sièges et nous avons, je peux voir une base. Nous avons une base électorale, électorale là, et je peux voir un chemin pour le parti pour continuer à nous bâtir à l'avenir. Et je suis pas...je suis déçu mais pas découragé, et nous continuerons à travailler pour garder la confiance des Québécois, des Québécoises, cette grande nation qui fait une partie si importante de notre pays. Je dois dire ceci : malgré le fait que nous n'avons pas fait de gains, évidemment comme fédéraliste, comme Canadien, je suis encouragé par la chute du Bloc

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québécois. Et si on regarde la situation avec la souveraineté et la position du Bloc en 2005, on a vu un incroyable changement de cette réalité politique au Québec depuis notre arrivée en fonction. Et je pense que notre façon de gérer la fédération et de gérer nos relations si importantes avec le Québec a grandement aidé ce changement pour le bénéfice du pays, et (inaudible) pour le bénéfice du NPD, je prends un peu de crédit pour ça, mais évidemment nous avons beaucoup de travail à faire pour gagner la confiance des Québécois pour nous autres.

Yeah, absolutely. Just saying obviously we're disappointed with the results in Quebec. It's not just that we've lost the seats of some of our MPs, ministers, candidates, and in some cases, as you know, we've lost the services to Parliament of some very great Canadians and Quebecers who have made enormous contributions to our government, to their country, and I think as well to their ridings. But that's the decision of the voters and we accept it, and we accept that we have a lot more work to do to gain the true confidence of Quebecers, and we're dedicated to doing that. We did win some seats, you know, and as I look at the situation, we are establishing, as much as I'd like it to be better, we are establishing a very clear electoral base in the province, and I can see very much in my own mind a clear path to how we will expand that in the future. Now is not the time to reflect on, you know, the up sides and down sides of where we are today, but I think, you know, I'm, as I say, I'm disappointed, but I'm not discouraged. I'm also encouraged for the country. You know, if you look at what has happened to the Bloc Quebecois, not just last night, but compare the overall situation, the Bloc Quebecois and the sovereignty movement today with where it was in 2005, before we came into office, and you see just an enormous change. I think a lot

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of that has to do – we are going to take some of the credit for that, with how we’ve managed relations in the federation, and with Quebec. Obviously I’m disappointed that the NDP has been, for now, the beneficiary of most of that, but I do think we deserve some credit for that in terms of the wider interests of the country, and obviously as I say, I am encouraged that the shift is towards federalism, and I do see a way we can gain the confidence of Quebecers, and we’re committed to doing that.

MODÉRATEUR : Raymond Fillion, TVA.

JOURNALISTE : Bonjour Monsieur Harper. Je comprends que vous êtes déçu de vos (inaudible) au Québec, mais j’aimerais savoir comment vous expliquez le fait que les Québécois vous ont tourné le dos aux élections cette année, et surtout comment la voix du Québec serait-elle entendue au sein de votre gouvernement? Moins de quatre pour cent de vos, de tous vos députés, de toute votre députation provient de la province de Québec. Est-ce que c’est possible, par exemple, que vous nommiez un non-élu au cabinet comme vous avez fait en 2006?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Je peux dire...je peux dire que ce n’est pas le jour de faire tout une analyse de la situation, mais nous avons en même temps, nous avons fait élu plusieurs députés, plusieurs députés expérimentés qui auront une place importante au sein de notre gouvernement. Et évidemment j’espérais pour plus, mais nous avons une représentation importante et nous resterons à l’écoute des Québécois, des Québécoises dans toutes les régions pendant les quatre années à venir.

So I’ll just say that, you know, as I say, I’m not going to do an entire analysis of the situation tonight. Obviously there are some significant challenges before us. But we have elected in Quebec, we have

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elected some people, we have elected some people, some strong people with good experience. They will make a significant contribution to our government. We obviously will continue to work as well with the government of Quebec with whom we have a good relationship, and I'm encouraged that Quebec will have its place and will have its say, but obviously we will need to continue to listen, to listen to all regions, and we will have our work cut out for us, and we recognise that.

MODERATOR: Chris...

JOURNALISTE : (Inaudible) vous avez pas répondu à ses questions...

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Je peux dire que...je peux dire que j'ai fait ça en 2006 comme un expériment dans des conditions un peu différentes, mais je suis engagé en 2008 de ne pas répéter cet expériment pour les ministères majeurs, et c'est encore ma position. On aura, sauf pour le chef du gouvernement au Sénat, on aura des élus au cabinet.

So just to repeat that, we did do something a little bit different because of the unusual circumstances in 2006. We said we would not repeat it in 2008. That is my position. We'll have elected people in our cabinet, except for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

MODERATOR: Chris from CTV Calgary.

REPORTER: Sir, what does this majority mean for Western Canada?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I think it means, first and foremost, if you don't mind me saying, that I think Western Canada can breathe a lot easier. You know, there's...there were a lot of policies being floated by the other parties, whether it's on, you know, west coast

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transportation or the energy sector that simply did not reflect the needs and concerns of this part of the country; in fact, I think were pretty seriously threatening to the interests of this part of the country in particular. I mean, I actually argued, as you know, during the campaign, that the economic policies of our opponents were actually quite dangerous for the country as a whole, but obviously some specific policies seemed to be almost targeted to do damage in Western Canada. So I think it's a great thing that those policies will not be coming to fruition. The West has been, as you know, a very important part of our government, will continue to be a very important part of our government, and the West will have its say, and I think Westerners also understand they're going to have to share that say with all other parts of the country.

MODÉRATEUR : Merci beaucoup, tout le monde.

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Merci tout le monde.

Thank you.

MODÉRATEUR : Thank you. Merci, tout le monde.

(REPORTERS CALLING OUT QUESTIONS)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: A little bit about how it feels. I'll give you a little bit...just a little bit. I'm going to tell you it feels good. What else can I say? At the same time, look, it feels great, but at the same time, I am...I am very much aware of the immense challenges that lie before us in the government and the responsibility that this office carries with it. So you know, we try and take it in stride, but obviously it's a good day. My staff, my staff had me celebrating last night. They pulled me up to the room...I can tell this story, eh? They pulled me up to the room. They made me pop this champagne, and then after I'd said a few words, they passed me the champagne and wanted me to guzzle it out of the bottle, and some of you may

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know, I'm not much of a drinker, but I did. However, they tricked me. There was only, like, that much in it. So, so much for my wild side. (LAUGHTER) That's as wild as it got. Anyway, thanks.

MODÉRATEUR : Merci beaucoup, tout le monde. Merci.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Ok, equal opportunity. Equal opportunity. Equal...

Oh, l'Ouest? Juste l'autre histoire. Comme je viens à plusieurs reprises, c'est une, évidemment, j'ai un très grand sentiment. C'est un honneur. C'est un très grand honneur pour la population canadienne. Je suis très heureux. En même temps je suis bien conscient de tous les défis et les responsabilités de cette position. Hier soir mes employés ont célébré. Ils sont capables. Il me semble que mes employés peuvent travailler sans jamais coucher, sans coucher, mais nous avons une célébration. J'ai ouvert une bouteille de la champagne. Ce n'est pas mon habitude de boire beaucoup, mais ils ont insisté que je bois la champagne, de la champagne de la bouteille, et je l'ai fait, mais il y a seulement un petit peu. My...c'est la limite pour moi. Merci.

MODÉRATEUR : Merci, tout le monde. Merci, tout le monde. Merci, tout le monde.

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