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PRIME MINISTER'S FLOOD TOUR IN BRANDON

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UNIDENTIFIED: Sorry.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): So, I'll just say a couple of words, and do you want to say something (inaudible)? Well, just first of all, I appreciate the Premier inviting me here today. It was a great idea to come out. I know...I know this is worrying and inconveniencing a lot of people, but I can tell you the Premier has been in touch with me about this since last (inaudible) so I know a lot of work has gone into the preparations here. Even though there's still some problems (inaudible) the sheer mass of the water, I think it's remarkable how little damage has been done so far, but obviously for those who have been affected or inconvenienced, our thoughts and prayers will be with them. And we also of course want to thank the men and women (inaudible).

Pour répéter, merci au Premier ministre Selinger pour son invitation d'être ici. Il travaille avec nous depuis octobre pour gérer la situation, et malgré...malgré la grandeur des inondations jusqu'à maintenant, c'est remarquable qu'on a contrôlé les choses...les choses si efficacement. Je peux dire, je sais qu'il y a beaucoup qui sont inquiets de la situation, et nos pensées, nos prières sont avec eux. Et je voudrais aussi remercier les hommes et les femmes des Forces armées canadiennes pour leur aide. Et je voudrais dire la même chose pour les inondations de la Vallée du Richelieu. Nos pensées, nos prières sont avec les gens là qui ont aussi souffert de cette situation (inaudible) à cet endroit.

GREG SELINGER (Premier of Manitoba): And I would say we started talking about this last October. The Armed Forces and the federal government have been involved in our planning since day one, so when

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I made the call to the Prime Minister's Office (inaudible) troops were moving right after the phone call, and on the ground and ready to serve the people of Manitoba the next day, so I want to thank the Prime Minister for his very rapid response and the ability to get a hold of them Sunday night, and it's making a huge difference out here (inaudible) making a difference here, making a tremendous difference around Portage La Prairie on the dikes, and a good thing they can (inaudible) particularly in areas where people are at risk. So the federal response has been excellent, and we appreciate it (inaudible) with all the tremendous work (inaudible) provincial officials. It's been a real effort from the community right on up to work together to meet this challenge. And so far we've done extremely well. We have to remain vigilant, obviously, but it has made an enormous difference.

Et en français, j'aimerais remercier le Premier ministre pour sa présence ici aujourd'hui, parce que c'est une énorme différence d'avoir la coopération du gouvernement fédéral. Depuis l'automne, les préparations étaient faites avec la participation du gouvernement fédéral, et la minute que j'ai fait l'appel au Premier ministre, il a répondu immédiatement, et nous avons (inaudible) on travail avec des citoyens et citoyennes du Manitoba immédiatement (inaudible) grand avantage d'avoir une réponse (inaudible) comme ça. Merci encore, Monsieur le Premier ministre.

REPORTER: (Inaudible)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: There are programs in place for different disaster financial assistance, also there are programs in place specifically for agricultural disaster. The Premier's been talking to me about some additional (inaudible) including some assistance (inaudible) on some of the permanent works that have been undertaken, but obviously those

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discussions will continue. But in the meantime, of course, there will be disaster assistance under the (inaudible) provided here.

REPORTER: What about going forward for mitigation, and, like, this stuff could be repeated next year. What can the government do...?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, the Premier's talked to me. The current disaster financial assistance act really deals with what has happened. Now, in this case, the Premier and I talked during the campaign, and I committed that we would fund some of the permanent mitigation work that was done just after the...after January 24th, basically. I do think going forward we have to take a look at more proactive financing arrangements for mitigation, especially where this kind of event is fairly regular. So that's...those are discussions we'll be having in the months to come.

GREG SELINGER: But that commitment from the Prime Minister to look at (inaudible) mitigation (inaudible) property losses, and at the end of the day, it's going to save taxpayers money, because take a look at (inaudible) a lot of damage that's been prevented so far. We're all working hard to make sure that stays that way. These kinds of (inaudible) new policy initiative (inaudible).

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: (Inaudible) Premier, this is (inaudible) the scale of the water, how much damage is actually being prevented (inaudible) so I think this, you know, we've seen in the past this has been money well spent, and we just have to come to some arrangements (inaudible).

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REPORTER: You didn't say how long that would take (inaudible).

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I never say how long it will take. (LAUGHTER) We're worrying right now, I think we're all worried about just making sure as many people stay dry as possible in the next couple of weeks.

UNIDENTIFIED: Ok, thanks very much, everyone.

REPORTER: Can you talk about the scope of flooding that you've been seeing as you've been taking the helicopter (inaudible)?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, you know, obviously, you know, the whole province is wet. Even where it's not flooded, it's wet. There's a lot of water, and I've been through a couple of these tours before, so I know the scale you get here in Manitoba (inaudible). That said, I do have to say and I do want to emphasise and really compliment the Premier and his government, because in spite of the volume of water, it is remarkable how much (inaudible) remarkable job has been done considering the sheer...the sheer enormity of this. You know, you basically got Lake Agassiz recreated every spring. It's really something to behold.

GREG SELINGER: And let's not underestimate, when volunteers and local officials have been working hard for 30 days, and then the military comes in and bolsters their efforts, it's a big morale booster. It helps push it over the top. So we're seeing the good results from everybody pulling together again. The Prime Minister showing up today has made a big difference. People know that, and they know we're having these discussions, and it makes a big difference, not just in Manitoba, but we think that some of the things that are being done here will benefit the country, because of all that

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preparatory work on mitigation, all those investigations make a huge difference.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thanks very much, everyone. Thank you. Thanks guys. Prime Minister?

GREG SELINGER: We have a voucher system here. We give people the resources they need when they show up at the evacuation centres. If anybody's displaced or out of their home, the most important thing to do is register at an evacuation centre, and all the support they need will be offered to them. So we will continue to provide full support to people, but they're got to go to those centres and register.

REPORTER: So that's a no on that...

GREG SELINGER: No, it's not. It's a voucher system. We have a system in place to give them resources. If additional tools can be brought into play to help them out, if they're out of an extended period of time, that will be considered, but the most important thing is to get to the evacuation centre, get signed up and then we can work with them. Ok?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Thanks everyone.
Merci.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

GREG SELINGER: Thank you. Thank you, folks.

1328 words

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