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PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON SPINAL CORD INJURY
RESEARCH INITIATIVE AND SCRUM

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STEVEN FLETCHER (Conservative MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health): ...Parliament for Charleswood-St. James-Assiniboia in Manitoba and I'm also the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Health. We're here today at the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre for a very important announcement. In a moment's time Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Rick Hansen will sign an agreement which... where which Canada's new government will pledge its support for a new spinal cord injuries research initiative. Needless to say, this announcement is one of great importance to me and tens of thousands of other Canadians across the country. Ladies and gentlemen, will you please welcome Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Rick Hansen. (APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Should I begin, Steven?

STEVEN FLETCHER: No, I think I'm...just going to say... Good morning. It's an honour and a pleasure to be here today. 11 years ago, a collision with a moose on a highway in Northern Manitoba left me a quadriplegic, completely paralysed from the neck down. I was told that if I was going to live, it would likely be in an institution. I was on life support, unable to speak but fully conscious. 11 years ago this month, at my bedside I had a very special visitor. This visitor brought a glimpse of light where there was darkness all around. The visitor provided encouragement to me and my family. The visitor was and is world renowned for the vision and courage to embark on his Man in Motion tour. The individual who came to see me in that hospital so many years ago is here today, and his name is Rick Hansen. When we... (APPLAUSE) When we met in the hospital, I don't think either one of

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us would have ever believed that 11 years later, we would be on this stage making such an important announcement.

The assumption that most people have about spinal cord injuries and other central nervous system damage is that it is permanent, and today for the most part that is true. However, thanks to the vision and support of people like Rick Hansen, there's exciting research going on in Canada and around the world. This research offers hope to tens of thousands of people like me and countless of individuals in the generations to come. Rick Hansen's one of my heroes, and I'm also blessed today to share the stage with another hero of mine, a man of extraordinary energy and determination who has also surpassed expectations and defied preconceptions, a man of conviction, who delivers on his commitments and who is single-minded in his resolve to make Canada stronger, safer and better, a man who, as leader of my party and the Prime Minister of Canada, is getting things done for all of us. Ladies and gentlemen, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper. (APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Thank you very much, Steven. Good morning. Bonjour tout le monde. Je suis très heureux d'être au Centre de réhabilitation de l'Hôpital d'Ottawa pour annoncer une très importante initiative de recherche sur la santé.

It is a great pleasure to be here at the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre today to announce a very important health research initiative. Before I begin, I'd like to just pay my own tributes to the people who are on the stage with me today. First, the man who was kind enough to introduce me, Steven Fletcher. Steven, who serves of course as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, long-time supporter of mine. He's also been, as you can imagine, not just a passionate advocate for spinal cord

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research, but he is an example and an inspiration to many, including of course I think his colleagues on all sides of the House of Commons. So thank you, Steven, for the work that you do. (APPLAUSE) Our government's Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Clement is with us, who as many of you know has been doing a first-rate job handling this and many very important issues. Give Tony a big welcome. (APPLAUSE) And finally, a man known and respected by Canadians across the country, Mr. Rick Hansen. (APPLAUSE) I must say, it's always an honour and a privilege to be able to meet with Rick. As you know, Rick was paralysed from the waist down at the age of 15. At that point, he resolved to devote his life to changing society's preconceptions about what those with spinal cord injuries can achieve. To that end, from the parking lot of the Oakridge Mall in Vancouver, he began an extraordinary journey on March 31st, 1985. Over the next two years, Rick would wheel through an amazing 40 000 kilometres across 34 countries. Through his legendary Man in Motion world tour, he garnered international attention and raised millions for research on spinal cord injuries. Now, true to form, despite this incredible accomplishment, Rick still wasn't satisfied. He wanted to do more. And so he has. Over the years, the Rick Hansen Foundation has generated millions of dollars for research and programs aimed at making communities more accessible and inclusive for those living with spinal cord injuries.

Grâce à son leadership et à ses efforts incessants, Rick Hansen a fait une différence dans la vie de plus de 40 000 Canadiennes et Canadien souffrant d'une lésion de la moelle épinière. Disons simplement que Rick Hansen est un véritable héros canadien. (APPLAUDISSEMENTS) Voilà pourquoi je suis si honoré de partager la scène avec lui aujourd'hui pour

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commémorer le 20^e anniversaire du tour du monde l'Homme en mouvement, et je suis fier d'annoncer une contribution de notre gouvernement au réseau d'application de recherche sur les traumatismes médullaires. Conçue par des chercheurs et des cliniciens du premier plan, cette initiative permettra de créer un réseau national. Elle permettra d'accélérer la traduction des découvertes innovatrices en avantage pratique pour ceux et celles souffrants d'une lésion de la moelle épinière.

Once again, to put it simply, Rick Hansen is a genuine Canadian hero, and that's why it's such a great honour to be on the stage with him today to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Man in Motion world tour by announcing funding for the Spinal Cord Injury Translational Research Network. Developed by leading researchers and clinicians, this initiative will create a national network whose purpose will be to accelerate the translation of innovative research discoveries into practical benefits for Canadians with spinal cord injuries. As the ultimate goal is to see people walking away from spinal cord injuries, the majority of the funding I'm announcing today will be used to explore ways to reduce permanent paralysis. Through this initiative, research will be conducted to determine the most effective methods of emergency and acute care, as well as which subsequent rehabilitation techniques work best. For those already living with spinal cord injuries, targeted investments will be made to ensure better mobility, increased functioning, decreased medical complications and greater independence. We must also ensure that these benefits are reaped by all Canadians with spinal cord injuries, not just those living in large centres. To that end, today's initiative will help to implement validated best practices in communities throughout the country, because whether one lives in Cornerbrook, Sault Ste.

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Marie or Regina, he or she should be able to benefit from the best practices available. In further aid of better treatment, this initiative will also complete the roll-out of a national registry. Through assembling and collecting relevant data, this registry will be an indispensable tool in helping to optimize available resources so that those with spinal cord injuries are able to receive more timely treatment, and finally, to ensure that Canada remains on the leading edge of spinal cord research, today's initiatives will help ensure the necessary infrastructure is set in place.

Le Réseau de recherche sur les lésions de la moelle épinière sera avant tout axé sur les avantages immédiats, mais il aidera aussi à accélérer les percées scientifiques vers un traitement. C'est un objectif ambitieux, mais compte tenu des talents et de la détermination des chercheurs canadiens, notre gouvernement a l'assurance qu'un jour ça sera possible. Entre temps cependant, le nouveau gouvernement du Canada est fier de soutenir les efforts de la Fondation Rick Hansen (inaudible) pour faire une différence positive et immédiate pour les Canadiennes et les Canadiens ayant une lésion de la moelle épinière.

Canada's new government is proud to support the efforts of the Rick Hansen Foundation to make an immediate, positive difference for Canadians living with spinal cord injuries. Every day through a combination of perseverance and courage, these men, women and children are laying to rest society's preconceptions as to what's possible, and while barriers still exist, these Canadians are a testament to what can be accomplished through dogged determination. Through today's announcement, it's my sincerest hope that the remaining barriers will be further eroded so that those with spinal cord injuries can make even greater contributions to our country, so thank you all. Thank

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you particularly Rick for your leadership. Merci beaucoup. And I will take a few questions. (APPLAUSE)

DIMITRI SOUDAS (Prime Minister's Press Secretary):
We'll be starting...one, two...

RICK HANSEN (Rick Hansen Foundation): Ladies and gentlemen, Prime Minister, Minister, Steven, I'd like to just say merci beaucoup, thank you very much. This is such a wonderful moment.

Merci beaucoup mesdames et messieurs, c'est un grand moment, c'est un bel jour.

This day marks the beginning, not just the retrospective look 20 years back during the Man in Motion world tour, but a way forward towards the realization of that dream. 20 years ago today, I was wheeling through the prairies. It was minus-50 and I was still a long way from home, from the completion of our world journey. But even further away was the grasp and the reach towards the realization of the dream behind the tour, which was to one day find a cure and to make communities more accessible and inclusive for people with spinal cord injury and other disabilities. And in those 20 years since the tour, Canada has been making incredible strides to be able to work closer towards that realization, and we have made amazing progress. Where 20 years ago there was very little hope if you had had a spinal cord injury of any recovery, today there are opportunities for people to have certain levels of recovery, which has demonstrated the fact that the progress we make in treating people truly does make a difference and that everyone must be guaranteed that same quality of intervention right after injury. We've seen discoveries as well in laboratories around the world that offer hope that if we prepare the country for translation of new discoveries,

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that more people will walk away from injuries right after an accident like Steven's or like mine. And this is fantastic news, Prime Minister, to see that this investment today is commemorating that dream, that Canada still believes in the dream that we will one day find a cure. I believe that we're halfway through that dream, that in 20 years from now with this investment, we will be able to see the day when people will be able to walk away again. But with the ability to make practical translations today, to make small progress that has profound impacts, we will get there in successive stages, where someone will have a chance to move their hand where it wasn't available before, or to breath independently without a respirator, or to apply new technologies to have better health. These are the practical applications that are the promise of this new network that your investment and partnership will make such a difference in today. I believe that in the future, there's no question we'll be able to reduce the incidents of permanent paralysis by 50 percent within the next ten years. I believe that in 20 years, we will get to that goal. So with your commitment, we are now uniting the capacity that we've built together throughout the country in this unified network so that we no longer work in isolation, that we do become a national team working in our country and internationally with our leadership towards that vision. I must say that I say that I have an amazing team working with me in my Foundation and clinicians and researchers and experts and people with spinal cord injury from across this country that are doing such great work. I am proud to be Canadian. I am proud do be a part of this amazing team that is striving towards this goal and this dream. You inspire me to believe that my dream will become a reality after all those years of hard work and determination to not give up and to know that with this commitment during this 20th anniversary, that our best work is in front of us

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and we will get to that goal. And that dream will become a reality. Thank you so much everybody. Thank you, thank you very much, Prime Minister for your support. I really appreciate it. (APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: So I correct myself. Rick and I will take questions. (LAUGHTER)

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Bonjour, good morning. We'll start with Roger Smith, CTV.

REPORTER: First of all, just let me say before I ask my cynical, journalistic question, that one of the most inspiring things I ever covered was watching Rick wheel through China and up the Great Wall. It was quite a moment. But turning to politics, Prime Minister, the Liberals have released another letter where you call the Kyoto Accord a fraud. And just in the context of today, the report that's being released in Paris, I'm wondering, does that put to rest forever in your mind the debate over whether the science is right and the fact that this report does not mention any solutions for the problem, does it reinforce your view that Kyoto isn't the right way to go?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, first of all, as I say, I think and I've said for some time, I think the science is clear that these changes are occurring, they're serious and we must act. We ran in the last election saying that, and we are in the process of putting in place, some of the elements are in place now, a plan to deal with this. You know, I...all I continue to tell people, and I think it's important to make this point, is that the problem is enormous. It's large, it's long-term, there are no quick fixes to this. You can't just snap your fingers and reduce emissions by one third, reduce Canadians' energy use by one third in the space of a couple of years. Nobody can do that, but we do need to have an action plan. After all these years, that's

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what we're putting in place. And we do need to continue to work internationally and we are working through the Kyoto process to try and get international action, to try and get action that will involve all of the world's major emitters, and as you know currently most of the major emitters are not part of the protocol, or at least have no targets under the protocol. So these are efforts that are important and that we will continue to work on.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Marie-Paule Rouleau, Radio-Canada.

JOURNALISTE: Bonjour M. Premier ministre. La question est sur le même sujet. Par ici, M. Premier ministre. Bonjour. On a eu aujourd'hui les résultats officiels du rapport du Groupe d'experts sur le climat. La situation est critique, est alarmante. Alors je me demandais, comme Premier ministre du Canada, êtes-vous prêt à imposer ou à appliquer surtout plutôt que prévu dans la loi C-30 les objectifs de réduction de gaz à effet de serre, et surtout êtes-vous prêt à imposer des cibles absolues et non pas des cibles basées sur l'intensité des émissions?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Premièrement, j'ai vu une résumée du rapport en avant. La science reste claire. C'est plus clair maintenant encore. Le gouvernement a l'intention d'agir, a l'intention de développer un plan à long terme pour contrôler et réduire les gaz à effet de serre. C'est la raison pour la loi sur la qualité de l'air qui prévoit pour la première fois les réglementations et la réduction des gaz à effet de serre et des polluants aériens, et je note que ce rapport international mentionne aussi des polluants aériens. C'est important d'avoir des cibles qu'on peut atteindre et qu'on peut garder la sécurité énergétique et plus important notre développement économique. C'est nécessaire d'établir un équilibre et nous

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sommes convaincus qu'avec un plan d'action qui peut développer et mettre en application des nouvelles technologies, on peut atteindre des objectifs importants, mais on ne peut pas, on ne peut pas dire à la population, "Vous devez réduire vos émissions, votre usage de l'énergie par un tiers en quelques années." Ce n'est pas réaliste.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: On va continuer, we'll continue with Brian Lilley, CFRB. Brian Lilley, CFRB.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, I'm sure you're aware of an ongoing debate that's been happening in Quebec around the issue of reasonable accommodation and how to deal with newcomers into the society. It's been going on for some weeks, and I'm wondering if we can get your thoughts on that, and in light of incidents like the singing cop, Herouxville, and if you could end by giving us a Superbowl prediction, I'd appreciate that as well, thanks.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: On...on...the debate in Quebec, as you know, this is a debate that's being carried on largely with provincial and municipal officials. I'm not sure I want to intervene other than just to say that I think in Canada we have an enviable record that we should build on of integrating newcomers into our society, by encouraging and embracing cultural diversity, while at the same time insisting upon the equal treatment of all men and women in our society, and I think that's something we should continue to work on. In terms of the Superbowl, I have to admit I'm not following it. Being Prime Minister, I can assure you I focus my exclusive football attention on the Grey Cup, which is always much more exciting. (APPLAUSE)

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DIMITRI SOUDAS: We'll continue with Peter Chura, CHUM.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, the Liberals continue to call you a climate change denier. Your Environment Minister is calling Mr. Dion "Mr. Delay". You've got your words, you've got your TV ads, they've got their old letters and speeches of yours. Do you think Canadians are impressed by the finger pointing and name calling on this issue, and do you think it will ever ascend above that?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, where it will ascend above that is as the government puts its own action plan in place. But you know, I think we have every right to call Mr. Dion to account. You know, he has a motion before the House of Commons asking the House of Commons to affirm the Kyoto targets on the very same day he goes in the newspaper and says there's no way they can be reached. You know, I think these...you know, we have to have serious debate. We have to talk about facts, not about fantasy. The government recognizes there is a serious problem. We ran, we said there was, we said we would deal with it, we said it wouldn't be easy. We're putting in place the measures. We brought in a major program to provide new monies to build public transit infrastructure. We're giving a direct tax incentive to public transit users to encourage their use. We've brought in a program, we've launched the beginnings of our program to develop renewable fuels, and we've brought in a range of eco-energy initiatives to encourage renewable energy, and to adapt technology. And as we say, this is only the beginning of the things that our government plans to do and most importantly, for the first time ever in Canadian history, to actually have a law to control and regulate greenhouse gas emissions. You know, I

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open the paper and I go in the House every day, and I see the other parties saying, "Well, it doesn't go far enough." But they don't propose anything! You know, I do have to point this out. We have three opposition parties beating their chest about this is the most important issue facing mankind and they haven't suggested a single practical way one would actually accomplish anything. You know, in government, you're not asked to get up and preach. As leaders in government, you're asked to act. You're asked to set achievable goals and achieve them, and that's what we're going to do.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: We'll continue with Hugo Degrandpré, La Presse.

JOURNALISTE: Bonjour M. Harper. Pour le rapport d'aujourd'hui, on a M. Baird s'est dit surpris du fait que...d'apprendre que les scientifiques avaient dit que les causes étaient essentiellement humaines, les causes du réchauffement climatiques. Est-ce que vous êtes aussi surpris que lui?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Non, c'est la conclusion...c'est une conclusion depuis longtemps, et je pense que cette conclusion est très forte dans ce rapport. En même temps, comme je continue à dire, on parle des tendances à long terme, des difficultés à long terme, et on doit avoir un plan à long terme pour répondre. Si nous agissons d'une façon déterminée pendant une longue période de temps, nous pouvons avoir des résultats. Si nous continuons, et si certains de l'opposition continuent de poursuivre des objectifs irréalistes, sans plan d'action, on ne peut pas réagir d'une façon responsable.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Continue with Randall Palmer, Reuters.

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REPORTER: Prime Minister, even if it is impossible to reach your...reach Canada's 2012 targets for Kyoto, under Kyoto, should Canadians look forward to emissions continuing to rise in that short time, or will you take steps to make them actually begin to fall so we can actually see some reduction by 2012?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I think the first step, realistic step in any such plan will be to try over the next few years to stabilize emissions and obviously over the longer term, to reduce them. But as I've said before, I think realistically the only way you can get absolute reductions is through the application of new technology over time. I don't think realistically we can tell Canadians, "Stop driving your car. Stop going to work. Turn the heat off in the winter." These are not realistic solutions. We need to adapt to new energy realities so that we can achieve emissions targets.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Christine St-Pierre, Radio-Canada.

JOURNALISTE: M. le Premier ministre, au sujet des...au sujet des certificats de sécurité, trois hommes à Kingston en Ontario feront la grève de la faim, un depuis 70 jours. Ils sont emprisonnés depuis des années sans accusations. Aujourd'hui, qu'avez-vous à dire à ces trois personnes?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Juste que le gouvernement poursuit ses actions selon la loi et selon la risque que nous croyons et que les cours croient qu'ils nous présentent comme société, et nous assurons à tout le temps que les gens en nos prisons sont traitement [sic] d'une façon humanitaire.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Continue with Mike De Sousa, CanWest.

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REPORTER Mr. Harper, on the proposals for the clean air act, how would you categorize the NDP's proposals? Are they also something you'd consider to be fantasy, or...?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, we are...we've had...I've had some discussions with Mr. Layton. You know, and I guess time will tell. I would say this, that the NDP has been somewhat more concrete in what it has to say about this than the other two opposition parties, and they're certainly, seem to be more willing than the others to actually put their own specific plans and ideas on the table.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Next question, Julie O'Neil, CanWest...or Ottawa Citizen.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, on the environment topic, I'm wondering if deep down you think that the environment policy is a ballot box question, or whether you'd like to get it off the table before an election, and how would you respond to Mr. Dion and others who say we should have an election campaign on environment policy?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, on...on, you know, the next election, I mean, you know my view that I don't think Canadians want an election right now. I don't see any reason for an election. I don't see any demand in the public for an election. I think what the public wants is for the government to get on with the actions they said it would take. Do I believe that environment questions will likely be on voters' minds in the next election campaign? Yes, I think so. I think these are long-term issues that are real and that are here to stay, and that parties have to address them. You know, at the same time, all I would say to, you know, to Mr. Dion, obviously we've been very clear what we're going to say to Mr. Dion. If he

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wants an election and wants to fight over his own commitment to the environment, you know, he has a record, and he's going to have to defend that record, and for what I've seen so far, he has no answers to explain how he accumulated as Environment Minister the worst emissions record on the planet.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Thank you very much, merci beaucoup.

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