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PRIME MINISTER'S MEDIA AVAILABILITY IN BURNABY

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MODERATOR: We'll begin with Ian Bailey from the Globe and Mail. Ian Bailey.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, wonder if you can take a question on another subject for a moment and... Right over here.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): There you are. Ok.

REPORTER: I need to ask you about the Senate. A number of senators who you've appointed have run into difficulties lately, Senator Brazeau, Senator Duffy and others. Are you... do you have any regrets about the appointment process? Are you rethinking the appointment process, especially as Canadians may be sort of losing faith in the institution, given these troubles that are still in the news?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, you know, obviously there's a couple of cases that are extremely different here. But as you know, our position for some time has been that we would like to see senators who are chosen by the people through a democratic process. And we've encouraged provinces to do that, and where provinces have, one province in particular has done so, I have appointed those elected people, and that's the reform we'd like to continue to see move forward, along with defined and shortened mandates. But look, the vast, notwithstanding... And obviously the situation with Senator Brazeau is terrible. It is extremely appalling and disappointing, and we all feel very let down, but you know, that should obviously not obscure the fact that most people in the Senate work very hard and take their responsibilities very seriously.

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MODERATOR: Next question, Kelly Senofsky, Vancouver Sun.

REPORTER: Hi there, Prime Minister. I'm just wondering, would you consider having Senator Brazeau resign, or asking him to, as a result of what's happening?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: As you know, he... I have removed him from our caucus. There is a process, since we gained control of the Senate a couple of years ago, there has been a strengthened process to deal with these kinds of issues, that obviously I think appropriately address public concern, but at the same time make sure that court processes are allowed to go forward. So you know, I say the Senate can refer to you what the process is in these cases.

MODERATOR: Next question is Natalie Clancy, CBC TV.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, you met this morning with the family of Kaitlynn, Cordon and Max, three children who are well known to people and their senseless murder. Can you speak as a father about what motivated you to come here today, and will what you've done today help Darcy Clark and Tim McLean's mother and others not have to face their killers every year review hearings? Will your measures today apply retroactively?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Just, I mean, let me answer the last question first, because there's been some confusion on this issue of retroactivity. Just so we're clear, those who remain in detention will be subject to these new provisions when they're passed into law. So in that sense, the provisions are retroactive. Obviously we could not apply them to people who've already been released and have completed the process. That would

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clearly be unconstitutional. So it is retroactive, obviously, in the reasonable sense of the term. You know, look, it's one of these, this is one of these days where you do realize, and it's one of those trivial things that everybody tells you, once you become a parent, you see the world through a different lens, and you know, an event like this, meeting Darcy and knowing, you know, obviously other people in similar circumstances can't help but touch you in a way that is extremely profound. One cannot, given the love we all have for our children, one cannot begin to imagine the pain and suffering that this kind of event brings about, that lasts for a very long time. And obviously we want to see... we want to see Darcy and Stacey and Mike and all the family heal and do all we can. We can't change terrible things in the world. Terrible things are going to happen. But we can create a system that is reasonable. I believe profoundly – it's one of the reasons I ran for public office, one of the reasons I led the Conservative Party under the agenda we ran on, is we believe profoundly that in the past several decades, the criminal justice system became unbalanced in a way that was really inexcusable. The rights of the accused, and ultimately the rights of the convicted are an important part of our system, but they are not everything that our system is supposed to be about, and particularly once someone is found guilty of a crime, the system should not be focused on their and only their needs, and... (APPLAUSE) And so what we're trying to do through this measure and many other measures is bring that balance back into perspective, and particularly, as I say, when we're dealing with people who have... who are convicted or have committed not criminally responsible terrible acts, the paramount responsibility has to be towards society at large and towards the victims specifically, and I think this is another step, an important step today in doing that.

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REPORTER: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Next question is Leigh Chekstadt from Global.

REPORTER: Job numbers were released this morning. It shows the country lost more than 20,000 jobs last month alone. Is that a concern, and do you think it's a sign of things to come?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: First of all, just, you know, obviously the job numbers the past month are disappointing, but job numbers are quite volatile month to month, and the fact of the matter has been that the pattern over the last several months has actually been quite positive. In fact, over the past three and a half years, it's been extremely positive. The Canadian economy has created a net, on a net basis 900,000 new jobs. There are more people working in Canada today than have ever been working in Canada before, and there are very few developed countries who are in a position like that. So the trend line has been positive, and I remain optimistic that the trend line will continue to be positive going forward. But we are in an uncertain time. We keep telling Canadians this. And volatility in the economy, given events in our export markets in particular, is something we should not be surprised about from time to time. As I say, disappointed with the numbers this month, but I remain very optimistic that the trend going forward in 2013 will be positive.

MODERATOR: Next question, Marcella Bernardo, CKNW.

REPORTER: In keeping with your famous warning about public safety being paramount, I'm tasked to ask you about the coast guard

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station at Kitsilano Point, and why is it that your government is unwilling to reconsider that decision to close it?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: The paramountcy of government resources in this area is on public safety, and the government is allocating its resources in a way that we believe, based on the advice we have received from the coast guard, that is best in terms of public safety, and that is to put as many of the resources we can into actually having... actually having rescue boats in the water, and that's where we put our emphasis going forward. We've made investments here and other parts of the country precisely in that way to try and move things away from offices and back offices, and to actually having resources on the ground and in the water, and that's what we're doing, and that's what we think is best for public safety.

MODÉRATRICE : Et la dernière question, Cendrix Bouchard de RDI.

JOURNALISTE : Monsieur Harper, en français en premier, en anglais ensuite, s'il vous plaît, pourquoi avoir nommé Monsieur Brazeau au Sénat, et est-ce que vous croyez que le Sénat devrait le suspendre?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Pour Monsieur Brazeau, comme vous savez très bien, je pense, quand j'ai nommé Monsieur Brazeau, il était chef national d'une des plus grandes organisations autochtones de notre pays, et évidemment les événements qui ont causé son expulsion de notre caucus et aussi ces accusations criminelles sont très récentes. Évidemment quelque chose s'est passé dans des... dans une période très récente, et nous sommes évidemment bien choqués, bien déçus avec cette situation. Il y a des règles nous avons créés depuis notre majorité au Sénat, des

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règles plus strictes pour de tels circonstances. Ces règles sont publiques, et le sénateur sera traité selon ces règles.

Just if... I think I answered the last part of the question in English already. If I could just answer the first part of the question again, just to be clear. Just to refresh memories, when Mr. Brazeau was appointed to the Senate, he was the national chief of one of the country's largest and most respected aboriginal organizations. The events that we're speaking of here are very recent in nature. Obviously in, over a recent period something has been going very wrong, and that is the reason for the situation that has developed, and that situation will obviously now be dealt with by the courts.

MODERATOR: Ok, that concludes... There's...

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Thanks.

MODERATOR: There's no... that's the last question.

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

MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Great. (APPLAUSE)

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