

H & K Communications

72 Elvaston Avenue
Nepean, Ontario
K2G 3X9

Phone: (613) 829-1800
Fax: (613) 829-2449
E-mail: hturkow@rogers.com

SOURCE: PCO

DATE: JANUARY 19, 2009

REFERENCE/ RÉFÉRENCE: 1901DOC1

LOCATION/LIEU: HALIFAX, NS

TIME/ HEURE: 14:00

LENGTH/DURÉE: 12:37 MINUTES

PRIME MINISTER'S MEDIA AVAILABILITY IN HALIFAX

H & K Communications

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

For Internal Information and Research Purposes only

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Bonjour tout le monde. I have no big announcement today, but I'll just say a couple of words, then take a couple of questions while I'm in town.

Je viens de finir une consultation, une table ronde avec des gens de la communauté d'affaires ici à Halifax, ici aux Maritimes. En effet, et ça fait partie des consultations que je fais, que nos ministres font à travers le pays, et nos objectifs, comme nous sommes en train de préparer notre budget, notre budget, sont clairs. C'est de stimuler l'économie dans cette période de récession mondiale, d'investir pour une prospérité à long terme, de protéger les emplois et de protéger les plus vulnérables, les individus et les communautés.

Once again, this is part of the pre-budget consultation I'm doing across the country. Just met with a group representing business people, the business community in the Maritimes. We've had very useful input across the country. As you know we're preparing a national budget for a week today. That budget will have several objectives to stimulate our economy during a period of global recession to invest for long-term prosperity, to protect jobs and obviously to protect those most vulnerable, both individuals and communities. And so with that, we'll take a couple of questions.

MODERATOR: We'll start with Marie-Line Marceau, Radio-Canada.

JOURNALISTE: Alors je vais poser la première des quatre questions qui nous sont permises aujourd'hui. Monsieur Harper, quel genre d'idée avez-vous entendu aujourd'hui que vous avez aimée de la part des gens d'affaires de la Nouvelle-Écosse, et qu'on pourrait voir sous une

H & K Communications

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

quelconque forme dans votre budget? En français s'il vous plaît, d'abord, et ensuite en anglais.

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Je peux dire seulement que j'ai entendu pour la plupart la même...les mêmes préoccupations partout. On a parlé du ralentissement économique, de la nécessité d'investir pour le long terme, les infrastructures, par exemple. On a parlé aussi à la nécessité de l'action et de l'action vite et efficace dans les investissements. En même temps, la nécessité de garder une...d'éviter, je devrais dire, d'éviter un déficit permanent, et c'est important, tout le monde, de dépenser immédiatement, mais d'éviter cette conséquence à long terme.

And once again, as I say, heard many of the same concerns here about employment, about the slowing economy, about infrastructure spending in particular. I think a general consensus, strong consensus that all governments need to spend, need to invest quickly and efficiently, effectively, while at the same time avoiding a long-term, permanent deficit, and we've heard that everywhere, and people are encouraging us, business community here and everywhere, to invest both in long-term assets, hard assets like infrastructure, but also in what we call softer assets like human capital and education. So the message...you know, obviously in every community I'm in, there are local issues and local industries that are stronger profile in some communities than others, but the themes everywhere are the same; credit availability also is obviously a big thing for the business community across the country.

MODERATOR: Richard Fort...Richard (inaudible), CanWest.

H & K Communications

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

REPORTER: Hello Prime Minister. Just wondering what your thoughts are and your expectations are of Barack Obama on the eve of his inauguration. What specific things are you looking for and hoping for out of his presidency for Canada? And also, have you had a farewell conversation, or have you sent a farewell message to George Bush?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I haven't. I had a conversation with President Bush...it was, as I recall, back in December. I haven't spoken with him in the last few days, but I do hope to speak to him probably in the days after he leaves office. In terms of President-Elect Obama, I also anticipate speaking to him in the not-too-distant future. As you know, he's making his first foreign visit to Canada, which I think is a wonderful gesture and a great...a great sign of re-establishing the strong Canadian-American relations that this country had for so many decades, something we've worked hard on as a government since we came to office. I think this is another step forward. Look, in terms of President Obama coming to office, this is obviously, as I said at the time of the election, the coming to office of the first African American president is a hugely symbolic and important page in American history. That said, and none of us are under any illusions about the great challenges that face President Obama, that are on his desk, I would, if I were in his position on the economic side, there would be two that would be very high on my list. One we heard a lot about, and that is obviously the stimulus package, the necessity of getting that right. The other is the necessity of continuing efforts to stabilize the United States financial sector, which continues to have significant difficulty. I know that our businesses here, as I said earlier, are concerned about credit availability and const in Canada, but the situation is really quite good compared to the situation south of the border.

H & K Communications

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

This will remain a major challenge to the world economy until it is fixed. So obviously we're looking to see what action will be undertaken on those. Beyond those things, my word on this today is the same as what I told President-Elect Obama when I spoke to him, and that is that in all the great challenges that confront him, he will find no better friend, neighbour and ally than Canada and than Canadians.

JOURNALISTE: En français sur vos attentes, s'il vous plaît.

MODERATOR: We'll move on to Mike...

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: En français? Je peux... je peux répondre. J'ai mentionné que sur le plan économique, le président Obama sera confronté par deux choses très importantes: un, le plan pour le stimulus américain. Évidemment nous faisons la même chose, la situation là avec un déficit déjà permanent et beaucoup plus difficile et beaucoup plus important. En même temps, la nécessité de prendre...de prendre des actions additionnelles pour stabiliser le marché financier aux États-Unis, les institutions financières restent en grande difficulté. Je sais qu'il y a des difficultés ici. Je viens de parler avec des hommes, des femmes d'affaires ici sur la situation avec le crédit pour nos industries, mais c'est une situation beaucoup meilleure au Canada. Et à moins...à moins qu'on puisse trouver une solution aux États-Unis, ça va continuer à être un grand problème pour l'économie mondiale. Pour...je peux mentionner évidemment, je devrais mentionner aussi en français la nature historique de cet événement. L'élection du premier président noir des États-Unis est une grande étape pour ce pays. Et comme je viens de mentionner, j'ai dit au président Obama, comme il cherche

H & K Communications

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

des solutions aux grands défis qui sont devant lui, il aura...il aura au Canada son plus proche ami et allié pour affronter ces problèmes.

MODERATOR: Michael (inaudible) C Press.

REPORTER: Canadian Press. Mr. Ignatieff has made clear that – and the Liberal Party's made clear they can't support broad-based tax cuts to the middle class if it leads to a deficit, and they have two other conditions as well. Can you agree with that? Can you find common ground with that?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: As I've mentioned earlier, Mr. Ignatieff indicated a couple of weeks back that he wanted to see middle class tax relief, and has indicated more recently that he may not. I think the link between these two statements is his concern about avoiding a long-run permanent deficit. That is obviously a concern that the government of Canada shares. We need – and I think everybody, it's a broad consensus in the country that we need with our G20 partners to engage in significant deficit spending now to stimulate our economy, but that that cannot become permanent. We're all on the same page on that score, and I think we're also on the same page on the basic notion that the middle class must be part of our economic recovery.

REPORTER: (Inaudible)

MODERATOR: Elaine Ferguson, we'll move on to Elaine...

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Ah, je peux (inaudible) en français. Comme je viens de dire, Monsieur Ignatieff a mentionné son appui pour les réductions de taxes et des impôts pour la classe moyenne il y a deux semaines. Il y a une semaine il a mentionné le contraire, mais je pense le

H & K Communications

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

message là et ses inquiétudes envers un déficit permanent évidemment, c'est quelque chose que nous partageons. C'est important de stimuler l'économie maintenant avec les déficits à l'heure actuelle, mais d'éviter un déficit à long terme, et c'est aussi essentiel d'inclure la classe moyenne dans un plan de renforcement de notre économie, et je pense que nous...j'espère que nous pourrions établir un consensus sur le budget et sur ces objectifs.

JOURNALISTE: Donc ça serait des baisses d'impôts...

MODERATOR: And we have time for one last question, Elaine Ferguson, CTV.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Sorry.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, it seems that you're certainly willing to put Mr. Ignatieff's concerns at ease. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to have your government survive?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: The government, as you know, is listening broadly. We will come forward with a budget that we believe is in the interests of the economy and that will carry the overall judgement of the Canadian people, you know, understanding that there are lots of conflicting demands. All the political parties in Parliament don't agree on everything. There are certainly broad aspects of what the Liberal Party is saying that we can agree with. Beyond that, as you know, the Liberal Party has been very general in its wish list for this budget, extremely general, so we don't have a lot in terms of specifics. This government will have to take responsibility for those specifics, but as I say, I think we'll have a budget, listening, as I have, to Canadians across the country, one that addresses the general needs of this country, both immediately and as we go forward, and I would say, you know, one other thing that I think has been interesting with the

H & K Communications

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

opposition is that, you know, if you look at some of the parties like the NDP and their previous opposition to corporate tax reduction, for example, you know, in the process of trying to find consensus with the Liberals, even, they've had to abandon that position, so you know, I do think...I do think there are some common themes emerging across the country, and we may not agree on everything, but I think we will have a budget that broadly responds to public demands. Obviously we will not do things that we think are not in the public interest, and that's, you know, bottom line for any government, but we are listening, and I hope we'll find some consensus. Thanks everyone.

MODERATOR: Thanks everyone.

H & K Communications

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