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PRIME MINISTER PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER CABINET
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TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Premier ministre du Canada) : Bonjour. Le deux mai les Canadiens et les Canadiennes ont décidé d'appuyer notre bilan et notre plateforme conservatrice. Plus particulièrement, les Canadiens ont choisi d'appuyer notre Plan d'action économique en réélisant notre gouvernement avec une majorité nationale. Depuis plus de cinq ans, la priorité absolue de notre gouvernement est l'économie du Canada, une priorité qui a eu encore plus d'attention durant le bouleversement dans les marchés mondiaux au cours des deux années et demi passées. Comme vous le savez, juste avant que l'opposition ne force cette tenue d'une élection, le ministre Flaherty a présenté le sixième budget de notre gouvernement. Dans ce dernier budget, il a décrit la prochaine phase du Plan d'action économique du Canada. Tout au long de la campagne, notre équipe a sollicité un mandat pour adopter le budget, pour garder le cap, et pour guider l'économie canadienne dans le parachèvement de la reprise mondiale, une reprise qui, si elle est prometteuse, reste néanmoins fragile. Le mandat que les électeurs nous ont confié le deux mai dernier nous enjoint de nous concentrer sur l'économie et plus généralement sur la stabilité.

Si l'économie est notre principale priorité, nous allons travailler dur sur toutes les priorités pour lesquelles nous avons fait campagne. Les Canadiens et les Canadiennes peuvent compter sur ce gouvernement pour adopter des mesures qui créent des emplois et favorisent la croissance, qui soutiennent nos aînés, protègent notre système de santé, et luttent contre le crime, tout en travaillant bien sûr à réduire et à éliminer le déficit. Nous avons reçu ce mandat parce que après cinq ans, la population sait qu'elle peut compter sur notre équipe. Notre équipe a de l'expérience et un bilan solide. Et

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si un certain nombre de changements était nécessaire et souhaitable, le nouveau conseil des ministres en est un fondamentalement de stabilité et de continuité. N'importe quel entraîneur de hockey vous dira que pour qu'une équipe continue à gagner, elle doit conserver un noyau de vétérans et y ajouter graduellement de nouveau talent. Je suis fier de dire que notre équipe peut compter sur une liste de candidats solides, une liste de candidats plus solides que jamais. Il y a de nouveaux députés prometteurs et de nombreux vétérans qui méritent une promotion. Je veux le répéter : il y a de nouveaux députés prometteurs, et de nouveaux vétérans qui méritent une promotion, à tel point que je trouve très difficile de choisir entre autant de candidats d'aussi grande valeur. Ceci dit, je crois que ce conseil de ministres représente le bon dosage d'expérience et de sang neuf actuellement. Je suis confiant que l'équipe qui vient tout juste d'être assermenté par son Excellence, le Gouverneur général, constitue le groupe d'hommes et de femmes tous désignés pour maintenir le Canada sur la voie d'une plus grande prospérité. Elle comporte une solide représentation de toutes les régions, et elle va se mettre très vite au travail.

I'll repeat that. On May the second, Canadians chose to endorse our Conservative record and platform. In particular, Canadians chose to endorse our Economic Action Plan by returning our government with a national majority. For more than five years, our government's highest priority has been Canada's economy, a priority which has had even more attention during the upheaval in global markets over the past two and a half years. As you know, shortly before the opposition forced the election, Minister Flaherty presented our government's sixth budget. In it, he outlined the next phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan. Throughout the election campaign, our team sought a mandate to pass the budget, to stay the course, and to guide the

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Canadian economy through the completion of the global recovery, a recovery that, while promising, remains nevertheless fragile. The election mandate we received on May the second is a vote for this focus on the economy and more broadly, a vote for stability.

While the economy is our top priority, we will be hard at work on all of the priorities on which we campaigned. Canadians can count on this government to pursue measures that create jobs and economic growth, support seniors, protect our healthcare system, and fight against crime while of course working to reduce and eliminate the deficit. We have received this mandate because after five years, people know they can count on our team. It has the experience and the track record. And although a number of changes have been necessary and desirable, the new ministry is fundamentally about stability and continuity. Any hockey coach will tell you that if a team is going to keep winning over time, it must maintain a core of veterans and then gradually blend in new talent. I'm proud to say that our team has a deep roster; in fact, it has a deeper roster than ever before. There are promising new MPs and many veterans deserving of promotion. Indeed, I find choosing between so many worthy candidates an increasingly difficult task. That said, I believe this ministry represents the right mix of experience and new blood at this time. I'm confident that the team which was just sworn in by his Excellency, the Governor General, is the right group of men and women to keep Canada moving forward toward greater prosperity, had a strong representation from all regions, and it will hit the ground running. Thank you.

MODERATOR: The Prime Minister will now take a few questions. When I say your name, please raise your hand and a boom mic will come to you. We'll start with Tonda McCharles, the Toronto Star.

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REPORTER: Good morning, Prime Minister. We're looking to the people you've named to cabinet to get some signals about what it is you want to accomplish here, and in that vein, I'd like you to reflect a bit, please, on the journey, which seems somewhat remarkable. You've vaulted Peter Penashue, the first First Nations full-fledged minister to your cabinet, so I'd like you to reflect on his journey. Also, why did you leave so much talent on the bench, such as people like Chris Alexander?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: You know, I'm not going to give a lot of commentary on individual MPs. We're obviously delighted to have Peter Penashue as a member of our government, as a member of our team. He won a historic election for the Conservative Party in Newfoundland and Labrador, obviously the only seat we won in that province. He's an aboriginal leader with already with an outstanding record of public service outside of government. So you know, he will be a great contributor to our team. He's also, as you know, as you say, the first First Nations, but he's actually the second aboriginal minister in our government. Also we have Minister Aglukkaq as well. In terms of...in terms of new MPs, we have many new Members of Parliament who are very promising. My focus at this time, I think I've said before, is really continuity, to complete the work we were undertaking. I've already had a significant number of changes I had to make because of retirement and the results of the election. So I didn't want to make too many additional changes unless I had to. There are many new Members of Parliament who will get opportunities to serve in other roles and gain some political experience, and we will have great bench strength for the future development of our government.

MODERATOR: Althea (inaudible), Post Media.

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REPORTER: I wasn't part of the list that was chosen, but I'll ask you. Regarding Libya, are you going to brief the NDP MPs as they have suggested, as they have requested?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: My understanding, the NDP has requested a briefing, and the Department of National Defence will provide that. There are of course also plans for us to have a Parliamentary debate on Libya when the House returns. As you recall, when we engaged in Libya, we did promise that Parliament would review this matter in three months, so we will do that during the month of June.

MODÉRATRICE : Hugo de Grandpré avec La Presse.

JOURNALISTE : Bonjour, Monsieur Harper. Juste ici à votre droite. Bonjour. Quatre des cinq députés du Québec ont été nommés ministres aujourd'hui. Est-ce que vous croyez que le Québec est victime de la faible représentation dans votre caucus? Par exemple, Maxime Bernier fait son retour au cabinet. Est-ce que vous aviez vraiment le choix de le nommer?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Évidemment nous avons un petit caucus au Québec, mais quand-même ils sont des députés très forts. C'est toujours des députés très forts qui gagnent contre une vague, et je suis confiant que nos ministres du Québec vont servir aux Canadiens, aux Québécois, au gouvernement de façon très efficace. Pour Monsieur Bernier, il était réélu. Il a mérité cette opportunité.

MODERATOR: Randall Palmer, Reuters.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, given the fragility of the world economy, and given the difficulty of running the IMF from prison, do you think Mr. Strauss-Kahn should be replaced immediately, and would Mr. Carney make a good choice?

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Look, I'm going to be careful what I say on this. Obviously the situation is very difficult. We are discussing with our partners at the IMF what the appropriate steps are under these circumstances. I'm not going to comment on the legal matters involving this particular individual. In terms of the Governor of the Bank of Canada, he's doing a wonderful job as Governor of the Bank of Canada. I have great confidence in him.

MODERATOR: Danielle Hamamdjan, CTV.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, I'm wondering how you can talk about austerity, restraint, and a scaled down government when you've just sworn in one of the biggest cabinets in history. Why do you need 39 people?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, first of all, I think it's important to know when you're talking about austerity, this government has reduced ministerial budgets significantly. So the question here is not costs. The question is making sure that we have a ministry that is broad, representative of the country, and tries to use people's talents to the maximum. This is, you know, I don't mind telling you, an increasingly difficult job. As our caucus gets larger and larger, it is increasingly a challenge to make full use of all of the people I have in front of me. I think it would be a mistake to try and have a smaller cabinet that would make less use of people, but as I say, we try and deal with the cost issue through slimming the budget of the ministers' offices, and we will continue to do that.

MODÉRATRICE : Paul Larocque avec TVA.

JOURNALISTE : Bonjour Monsieur Premier ministre. Qu'est-ce que vous dites aux Canadiens, aux Québécois sur les choix vous

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avez fait aujourd'hui et la trajectoire que va suivre maintenant votre gouvernement pour les prochaines années? À quoi doit-on s'attendre?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER : Je peux dire franchement que le gouvernement va faire ce qu'il a dit pendant la campagne électorale. Notre priorité principale sera l'économie. En même temps, nous avons beaucoup d'autres promesses et d'autres plans dans beaucoup de ministères qui (inaudible) aussi importants, mais pour ce gouvernement, nous émergeons de cette récession mondiale dans une position forte, en comparaison à presque tous les autres pays développés, et nous avons l'intention de garder cet avantage canadien.

MODÉRATRICE : Merci beaucoup, thanks very much.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Thanks everyone.

Merci.

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