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**PM HARPER AT TET TORONTO FESTIVAL
TO CELEBRATE VIETNAMESE LUNAR NEW YEAR**

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UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: Stephen Harper! Stephen Harper! Stephen Harper! Thank you.

(Applause)

RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER (Canadian Prime Minister): Merci beaucoup! Thank you very much! Xin chào buổi chiều (?)

(Applause)

Thank you all for that tremendous welcome and thank you for being here. You know, as I listened earlier to the introductions...as I listened particularly to that rousing rendition of our national anthem and I listened to the speeches, I really understood the tremendous passion this community has, not just in its identity but in its membership to this country.

I want to thank the Vietnamese Association of Toronto, all of the organizers, all of the community leaders, all of the religious leaders, and all of the volunteers for this tremendous event and this great turn out today.

(Applause)

And I want to thank all of the dignitaries who are here. We've got great representation from all levels of government, particularly I know from my own colleagues in both houses of the Parliament of Canada—I ask them to stand one more time as a group—please give them a big hand for all attending today.

(Applause)

And of course, my thanks and all of our thanks to my introducer who is, as you know, the first ever Vietnamese-Canadian member of the Senate of Canada, let's give one more big hand to Senator Ngo.

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(Applause)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to come back to Senator Ngo in just a moment, but before I do that let me just say this, Chúc mừng năm mới! Happy new year, everybody!

(Laughter & Applause)

As I stand here admiring this terrific gathering, frankly one of the biggest gatherings that I will speak to in all of 2015, I'm reminded of a story. It's a story of strength and survival, of resilience and renewal, of faith, family and freedom, ladies and gentlemen, the story I'm talking about is your story—the story of the Vietnamese Canadian community.

(Applause)

Cette histoire dans je parle est la vôtre d'histoire de la communauté vietnamienne du Canada.

It is your story, or perhaps it was your parents' story or your grandparents' story, but it is the story of this country's Vietnamese community. And it is a story that more Canadians should know. I know that it's a story that your Senator wants more Canadians to know. That's why he, along with our colleague in the House of Commons, Mark Adler, wants Parliament to designate April 30th as "Journey to Freedom Day" in honour of Canada's Vietnamese people.

(Cheers & Applause)

Now, why April 30th? The Senator says it's not because it's my birthday (laughter). It's inspired by his own journey to freedom and so many of yours to this country, beginning back 40 years ago in 1975. Every year on that day, April 30th, Canadians will in the future mark the modern beginning of this country's

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Vietnamese community. And I know, Senator, that everyone here wants to thank you for serving as a champion of this cause, and for freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law for all Vietnamese people.

(Cheers & Applause)

Mesdames et Messieurs, s'agit que notre gouvernement sera toujours à vos côtés pour soutenir la dignité humaine et la liberté de tous les peuples, y compris de peuple vietnamienne.

Ladies and gentlemen, know that our government will always stand with you in support of human dignity and freedom for all peoples, including the people of Vietnam. And...

(Applause)

And we will do this, friends, not because it is always easy but because it is the right thing to do—to stand for human freedom.

(Applause)

Let me just close with this. Looking back over these past four decades, I can say as Prime Minister without a shadow of doubt, that Canada is a better, stronger, and more prosperous country because you came here. Because you raised your families here. Because you started your businesses here. Because you built your lives here. And notwithstanding all of the uncertainties and dangers of the world around us, your many contributions will continue to help ensure that the best is yet to come for our great country.

(Applause)

Que l'année de la chèvre vous apport à vous et vos proches santé, paix, et prospérité.

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May the Year of the Goat bring to you and your loved ones,
good health, peace, and prosperity. Happy Tet. Happy Vietnamese New Year
everybody!

(Cheers & Applause)

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