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PM HARPER-ROUNDTABLE-RICHMOND HILL

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RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Bonne après midi. Thank you all for coming. I presume a number of you were already in the press conference held earlier today but nevertheless I'll repeat a few things that I have to say.

First of all, I just want to begin by welcoming my colleagues who are with us here today. Costas Menegakis, who is the Member of Parliament for this area, for Richmond Hill, and also Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Immigration. Lois Brown from just north of here and Parliamentary Secretary for International Development, and from the City of Toronto riding we have Member of Parliament Joe Daniel also with us.

This is my first media roundtable with GTA and the cultural communities in 2015. We've done this in the past. We try and do it fairly regularly and I appreciate that you could all join us. As we all know, the Greater Toronto Area is a very diverse region in all kinds of ways, including culturally and including in its media landscape as a consequence, and we believe it's important to do this and to spend some time with you because we believe two things: First of all, that you speak to your listeners, your viewers, your audiences. You speak to, or are read by large numbers of people in the greater Toronto area and not just in significant numbers but probably often seen as more authoritative voices in those communities than the so-called mainstream media is often seen in the mainstream community where, as you know, traditional media outlets are actually on the decline. So, you do good work and it's important that you're...we be able to be in touch with you and communicate with each other.

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Just quickly on today's announcements. I know there are some questions on that. The Anti-Terrorism Act 2015 seeks to fill some gaps in existing legislation, giving police and national security agencies greater tools and greater coordination to protect Canadians from the increasingly omnipresent global phenomenon of jihadi terrorism. This terrorism is not a future possibility, it is a present reality. The terrorists are not merely operating in parts of the world far away, they also seek to do harm to us here in Canada. They seek to do us harm because everything this country is--open, diverse, tolerant, free—are things they oppose. So we believe strongly the legislation will protect our values and protect the rights and freedoms that we all enjoy.

As we move forward, I just remind you of course that while this is an important priority—one that's been thrust upon the government—obviously given international and national developments. The government does have other priorities. Our number one priority remains the economy. Creating growth, creating jobs. This year balancing our budget while making sure we fully implement our tax reductions for families. Expanding our trade networks and continuing to reform our immigration system and keep a good flow of immigration into our country.

Terrorism, security, both in terms of the areas of criminal justice and terrorism will also remain a priority for the government as we go forward.

On the economy, you're obviously all aware of...in the last two or three months we have renewed volatility in international markets. In the past six years, I guess it's almost seven years now, in the past seven years these waves of volatility have come and gone. We've been through them before, we'll

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manage them again. It's a little bit different this time with some of the commodity sectors and specifically the oil and gas sector being hard hit. That all said, as you know my seat in the House of Commons is in Alberta and I've lived through ups and downs in the oil industry of this magnitude before and we know that the industry is resilient.

So, look, the government will confront these challenges but we'll continue to move forward with the fundamentals of our economic policy. And those fundamentals are: connect Canadians to the global marketplace, make our own policies market responsive, make sure that we're putting in place the low taxes, lower or lesser levels of regulation and other things necessary so that business can flourish and hire Canadians. And it's for all of those reasons that Canada does have a superior growth and job creation record over the ups and downs of the past seven years. But that will continue to be a focus.

In any case, those are my opening remarks. I just want to thank all of you for being here and giving me the opportunity through you to speak to your viewers, listeners, and readers. Thank you.

(Words: 802)

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