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**PM HARPER INTRODUCES NEW MEASURES
TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES**

[Applause]

DEAN ALLISON (MP - Niagara West-Glanbrook): Good afternoon everyone, and welcome. I would like to extend that warm welcome to all the hardworking entrepreneurs and small business owners who are here with us today. Small businesses are the foundation of any local...strong local economy and an integral part in keeping our community strong and prosperous. The Niagara region especially has some outstanding small businesses that stand out amongst their larger competitors. Your great creativity and dedication to your businesses and the local community are to be commended.

It's right here in Niagara that companies are applying their knowledge and talents to solving some of the most pressing problems of the 21st century. With over 26,000 small to medium-sized enterprises in the Niagara region, there are many innovative companies that stand out. I think of in Fenwick, *Accipiter Radar Technologies* is on the cutting edge of surveillance systems globally. I think of *Handling Specialty* in Grimsby that does work with Cirque de Soleil, as well as scissor lifts for the F-35 program, and a bunch of other things around the world. I think of *Moyer's Farms*. In 1799 it was started and spent a little bit of time on "Dragon's Den" trying to raise some money recently for their candy apples with Paul Moyer. And these are just a few of the many examples of passionate and hardworking entrepreneurs that the Niagara region has to offer.

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And so when I think of small and medium-sized businesses, I think strength, prosperity, and growth. Small business is the foundation of the community here in Niagara and all of Canada. So I want to thank you for all your hard work and dedication. Now I have the pleasure of introducing my colleague and my friend, the Member of Parliament for St. Catharines, Mr. Rick Dykstra to the stage.

[Applause]

RICK DYKSTRA (MP - St. Catharines): Well, thank you Dean for that kind introduction. You know there's a really good local Member of Parliament when regardless of national announcements or otherwise, he's here bragging about his riding, so that's the Dean Allison I know.

I certainly want to thank everyone for being here today. It's my great pleasure to introduce a man who, after serving as the leader of our country for going on nine years, really needs no introduction. And going on nine years, we're actually just two days short of our election from 2006, so he was here three times during that campaign. Actually, everyone makes a big deal when a Prime Minister is in a particular city or region but the Prime Minister has been here at least eight times during the nine years that he's been prime minister so, as I always say, Niagara is on the map in Ottawa and he's paying close attention.

He's led Canada with a strong steady hand, with resolve, with vision, and with passion. Under his leadership Canada has weathered economic storms that have turned other countries literally upside-down. Even as the global economy remains volatile and fragile, his leadership remains steady, anchoring Canada's recovery in those storms. In fact, Canada is still the best country in the G20 to do business in, and that's not according to me, that's according to Forbes

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and Bloomberg, and it's due in no small part to the leadership of our Prime Minister.

I could go on at length about his many great qualities, not the least of which is he's very well-known for his love for hockey and I think we'll have a little bit of a show for that this evening here in St. Catharines at the new Meridian Centre.

But I am pleased, I am honoured right now to ask all of you, ladies and gentlemen, to welcome our Prime Minister to our region, to the City of St. Catharines, the Right Honourable Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

[Applause]

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Thank you, Rick. Very nice. Thank you. Well done.

Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. Bonne après midi, good afternoon everyone. It's a real pleasure to be back here in the Niagara region and St. Catharines once more. And I'd like to begin by thanking our hosts, Joe, Rosanne, and Janet, all the people here at Framecraft. This is a business I'm told second generation ownership now, been around half a century, all-Canadian products. Just a real success story and we're delighted to be here so thanks to all of them.

[Applause]

I'd also like to thank Rick for his introduction and thank Dean for getting us started today. These are two long-standing members of our caucus. Rick is Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and Dean is the Chair of the Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee of the

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House of Commons. Two colleagues who have been around a long time, now very experienced and highly respected by their colleagues from across the country. You're really lucky to have them here so let's give them one more big hand.

[Applause]

I also want to welcome Laura Jones and our other friends who are here today from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business who are once again this year marking Red Tape Awareness Week. Clearing the clutter of regulations that can hamper hardworking Canadian businesses is something that our government supports wholeheartedly.

C'est pourquoi nous avons présenté notre loi sur la réduction de la paperasse. Which is why we introduced our Red Tape Reduction Act. That Act will give the full force of law to our one-for-one rule. The rule that says that for every new element or regulation that burdens Canadian business in the federal government, an old element has to go. In fact, it was during the CFIB's Red Tape Awareness Week last year that we introduced this legislation, so please give a hand to the CFIB for their leadership on this important issue.

[Applause]

Alors, mes amis, ce n'est pas un secret, lorsque le gouvernement et les entreprises, les petites entreprises canadiennes rament dans le même sens, c'est le pays entier qui y gagne. Notre gouvernement comprend depuis longtemps l'importance des petites entreprises du Canada.

It's no secret that when government and small business are rowing in the same direction, it is the whole economy that wins.

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Now that's what brings me here today. Our government has long understood the importance of Canada's small businesses. From the coffee shop on the way to work, to the garage where you get your car serviced, from the bakery that's been a local institution for decades, to the new start-up that gave your teenager a summer job. Taken individually, these small businesses are the fabric of our communities. Taken as a whole, however, take them as a whole and a dramatically different picture emerges.

Au Canada aujourd'hui, on en dénombre plus d'un million. En fait, les exploitations, les compagnies comptant moins de 100 employés forment 98% des entreprises canadiennes. Ces entreprises emploient presque huit millions de Canadiens et Canadiennes.

In Canada today there are more than one million businesses like that—one million small businesses. In fact, operations with fewer than 100 employees comprise 98% of all Canadian businesses. These businesses also employ almost eight million Canadians—that's almost 70% of the private sector workforce. And they're responsible for creating four out of every five private sector jobs. They are—small business certainly is—the fabric of our communities. But when I look at these numbers, another metaphor comes to mind.

La petite entreprise n'est rien de moins que le cœur battant de l'économie canadienne.

Small business is nothing less than the beating heart of the Canadian economy. But you already know that and so does our government.

C'est pourquoi nous avons fait une priorité de rendre la vie plus facile aux hommes et femmes qui exploit... qui exploitent ces entreprises.

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That's why we've made it a priority to make life easier for the men and women who run small businesses. Not that running your own small business is ever going to be easy, as I should say as Laureen and I—my wife and I--both know from personal experience since we both ran small businesses before I got back into politics, and I know many entrepreneurs who will joke that running their own small business is the most rewarding minimum wage job they've ever had.

[Laughter]

But, seriously, it's because we understand the challenge of running a small business that our government has taken the actions we have to support small business.

C'est pourquoi nous avons baissé les taxes et les impôts des petites entreprises et changé les règles pour rendre davantage d'entreprises admissibles aux taux moins élevés. L'an dernier seulement, cet allègement fiscal pour la petite entreprise s'est chiffré à plus de deux milliards de dollars.

It's why we've cut taxes on small businesses and changed the rules to make more businesses eligible for the lower rate. We know that anyone who puts in an 18-hour day running a small business because that's what you do, they would rather put their hardworking revenues back into that business, creating more jobs, growth and opportunities, than hand the revenue over to the tax man, and we're behind that one hundred percent.

Notre gouvernement choisira toujours les emplois et la croissance économique plutôt que les taxes et la paperasse.

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Our government will always choose jobs and growth over taxes and red tape. And last year alone, the tax relief that we had brought in for small business amounted to more than two billion dollars. That's in one year alone. Our support... (applause begins) ... Go ahead.

[Applause]

Our support for enterprising Canadians is also why we've encourage more investment in small business by increasing the allowable lifetime capital gains allowance, and indexing the new limit to inflation. It's also of course why Canada now leads the G7 in the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment. In fact, according to KPMG, compared to the rest of the G7, no country's total tax costs are as friendly to business as are Canada's.

C'est pourquoi nous avons g  r   les cotisations    l'assurance-emploi il y a deux ans et puis l'automne dernier nous avons... nous avons introduit le nouveau cr  dit pour l'emploi visant les petites entreprises pour maintenir ces cotisations basses.

It's why we froze employment insurance premiums two years ago and then why last fall we introduced the new small business job credit to keep those costs down for small businesses. This measure...that measure will save small Canadian businesses more than half a billion dollars over the next two years. Once again, things advocated by the CFIB, so give them a hand for their success in moving these things forward.

[Applause]

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And, of course, keeping these taxes down, friends, keeping these taxes down over the long term is one of the reasons we've made it a priority to return our budget to balance, something which we will do as scheduled this year.

Parce que nous savons tous qu'une solide situation financière est la meilleure base pour avoir une économie solide. Et pour les entreprises qui cherchent à développer leur... leur compagnie.

Because we all know that sound finances is one of the best foundations for the Canadian economy and for Canadians looking to build up their enterprise.

Je pense que nous sommes tous d'accord sur le fait que l'un des plus grands défis pour la petite entreprise est le financement.

So that's what brings me to today's subject now. I think we can all agree that one of the biggest challenges facing small business is financing. Financing to start a new enterprise, financing to improve an existing one. The fact is that the life of the entrepreneur is not for the faint of heart. It's a risk that only the boldest of souls can take, and those bold souls who are invariably people with energy and ideas, but not necessarily a lot of money on hand, why they need lenders willing to share the risk.

Today, by supporting enterprises when they seek private sector financing, the Canada Small Business Financing Program creates almost 7,000 new jobs every year.

Now, given this success:

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J'ai aujourd'hui le grand plaisir d'annoncer que notre gouvernement entreprend une expansion majeure du programme de financement des petites entreprises du Canada.

I'm very pleased today to announce that our government is undertaking a major expansion of the Canada Small Business Financing Program.

[Applause]

Nous allons relever la limite du montant maximal que les entreprises peuvent demander et nous allons augmenter le nombre d'entreprises admissibles à cette aide. Il en résultera plus de cent millions de dollars de plus pour les entreprises, les petites entreprises canadiennes à l'échelle nationale, ce qui leur permettra de recruter des centaines de Canadiens de plus qui cherchent un emploi.

We are going to raise the limit on the maximum amount businesses can apply for, and we're going to increase the number of businesses that are eligible for this help. This will result in over a hundred million more dollars for small businesses across the country, allowing them to hire hundreds more Canadians looking for jobs. This...

[Applause]

This, ladies and gentlemen, is about more than dollars and cents.

Il s'agit de soutenir les entreprises qui à leur tour soutiennent nos communautés.

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This is support for businesses that in turn support our communities. I talked about these small businesses being the fabric of our communities and as I like to say, because I so firmly believe it's true, what's good for our communities is good for our country. In fact, this country has been built by people who knew that if they thought big, invested wisely, and worked hard, their dreams would become their reality. That was the case nearly 150 years ago when this great confederation was founded and it is no different today, and we are determined that it will be no different for the generation to come.

Merci beaucoup. Thank you.

[Applause]

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