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**PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING WAJID
KHAN**

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): As you know, the new Conservative Party of Canada was born just over three years ago when the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties came together to create one big national party.

Nous avons réuni la famille conservatrice canadienne qui a fondé notre grand pays, et depuis, nous travaillons sans relâche afin d'élargir notre base.

Ever since, we've been working hard to make our party even bigger, stronger, more inclusive and more representative of our vast country and its diverse people. Our efforts were rewarded. Last January we grew our support from coast to coast, au Québec, in Canada's major cities and among new Canadians. The result was a new national Conservative government, a government that has been getting things done for everyone, east and west, français et anglais, rural and urban, young and old, foreign and native born. I'm very proud of what we have accomplished. Through persistence, dedication, compromise, good old-fashioned hard work, we have built a party that welcomes all Canadians.

C'est pour cela que je suis fier d'annoncer aujourd'hui que Wajid Khan, le député de Mississauga-Streetsville, se joint au caucus conservateur.

That's why I'm so pleased to announce today that Wajid Khan, the MP for Mississauga-Streetsville, is joining our Conservative caucus. I first met Wajid Khan after his election to Parliament in 2004. Despite our partisan difference, I admired his knowledge, his inspiring life story and his obvious love for our country, the country that has been his home for over 30

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years. When 17 people were arrested in Toronto last June, Mr. Khan put our country before his party. He contacted me directly and offered to help in any way he could. As a Canadian Muslim with a background in the Pakistani military and an abiding interest in terrorism and security, he brought a lot to the table, so I took him up on his offer and ever since, he has served as my special advisor for Middle Eastern and Central Asian affairs. He's traveled to the Middle East, provided me with the report, his work has been thoughtful, detailed and rich in very helpful information. I'm looking forward to his second report following his return from Central Asia. I've enjoyed working with Mr. Khan. In fact, the more we worked together, the more both of us began to realize that politically, we have an awful lot in common. We both believe in free enterprise and free markets, we both hold traditional views about the importance of family and community, and we both think Canada needs to take a more assertive role in world affairs. In time it became clear to me that Mr. Khan would be quite at home in the Conservative Party and an excellent addition to Canada's new government. Obviously he came to the same conclusion, and that's what brings us together here today. So I would like to formally welcome Wajid to the Conservative caucus. He will continue as my advisor on issues related to the Middle East and Central Asia, and he is committed to helping us continue to grow the Conservative Party, especially in the Greater Toronto Area and among new Canadians.

Je crois que le geste de Wajid Khan envers notre parti est un message positif pour tous les Canadiens, autant les Canadiens de souche que les nouveaux Canadiens. Il y a de la place pour tous les Canadiens au sein de notre parti. Tout comme notre pays, le Parti conservateur est une coalition

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vaste, diversifié, uni par une idéale commune de construire un pays plus fort, plus sécuritaire et meilleur pour tous et pour toutes.

I think Mr. Khan's move to our party sends a positive signal to other Canadians old and new. There's room in our party for all Canadians. Like Canada itself, the new Conservative Party is a broad, diverse coalition united by a common desire to build a stronger, safer and better country. And with the help of people like Wajid, that is exactly what we intend to do. So merci beaucoup, thank you, and Wajid, I'll ask you to say a few words.

WAJID KHAN (New Conservative MP, Mississauga-Streetsville): Thank you, Prime Minister. Good morning everyone. Over the past six months, I have been honoured to serve Prime Minister Harper and Canada's new Conservative Party, especially on Middle Eastern and Central Asian affairs. As you said, sir, the arrests in Toronto last June prompted me to put partisan interests aside and try to do something for our country. It has often been said, and no doubt it will be said again today, that politics makes strange bedfellows, but nothing about my decision to join the Conservative caucus feels strange to me, because I have come to admire the Prime Minister and his government during the last year. It is a government with a clear sense of direction, a mainstream agenda, commitment to honesty, openness and accountability, an assertive, realistic approach to foreign policy, and a real record of accomplishments. Also, and this is very important to me, many of my constituents in Mississauga-Streetsville, the Prime Minister and his government have demonstrated a genuine commitment to new Canadians. They have reached out to immigrant communities and taken action to solve some of the problems we've had for years with Ottawa. Among other things,

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they cut the right for landing fee, increased settlement funding, and finally got the government moving on credentials recognition. As a result, I have noticed that more and more Canadians are excited about joining the Conservative Party. For all these reasons, I came to the conclusion that my ideals and priorities and those of my constituents will be better served in the Conservative Party, so I was very pleased when Prime Minister Harper agreed that I should join Canada's new government. I must say that I did not come to this decision lightly, but quite frankly, the Liberal Party has moved away from people like me, people who believe in free enterprise, support for families, and a stronger, more assertive Canada on the world stage.

But there is another very important issue, and that issue is of leadership. Leadership matters, and I believe the best leader for Canada is the man who now has the job, Prime Minister Harper. I wanted to keep working with the Prime Minister to protect our national security, to advance and defend Canada's interests on the world stage and to ensure that Canada works for all Canadians, no matter who they are or where they may have come from. I also want to get things done for the city of Mississauga, the region of Peel, and the entire GTA on the issues of infrastructure and transit, public and community safety, air quality and the environment. I can't get these things done from the opposition benches, but I can as a member of government with a proven record of getting things done for Canadians and their communities. So today I informed, I called Mr. Dion as well as my riding association of my decision. I am pleased to report that my riding association president and several members of the board support my decision. Prime Minister, thank you, sir, for welcoming me into your party and your government. I look

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forward to working with you and the entire Conservative team in building a better, stronger Canada. Thank you, sir. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

DIMITRI SOUDAS (Prime Minister's Press Secretary):
Ok, so we'll begin shortly. We'll start with Brian Lilley from CFRB.

REPORTER: My first question is for Mr. Khan, actually, and that is critics in your former party, as well as many pundits have said that the Prime Minister's approach to Middle Eastern affairs is too closely aligned with Israel, too closely aligned with George Bush. You seem to feel comfortable with it. Can you explain to me what you see, what you appreciate in the Prime Minister's approach that brought you to the conclusion to move parties.

WAJID KHAN: Thank you for that question. Let me tell you, the Prime Minister's choosing me as his special advisor is a step which has never been taken in this country. It also indicates to me that the Prime Minister is very serious on moving the country forward in an area of Middle East where Canada's foreign policy either has been very hesitant or non-existent, and that is exactly what people told me when I went around, and I believe that the Prime Minister is very serious about engaging and learning from different opinions and different parts of different countries, and doing... making the determination where he has to go from there.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: We'll continue with Mireille Massé, Radio-Canada.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: If I maybe just could add something to that, on the subject at hand. As you know, the Conservative Party's policy on the Middle East is that we support a two-state solution to the problems in the Middle East. We believe that's the only long-term solution. A

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peaceful, democratic and secure Israel. A peaceful, democratic, viable Palestinian state. That's our position. What we've been clear on in the past year is that we do not, we will not do anything that is in support of terrorism. We will oppose terrorism and terrorist organizations not just in Canada, but around the world.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Mireille Massé, Radio-Canada.

JOURNALISTE: M. Harper, j'aimerais que vous précisiez si c'est vous qui avez demandé M. Khan de se joindre dans vos rangs, et pourquoi M. Khan vous attire comme membre de votre parti? Qu'est-ce qu'il a de particulier qui fait que vous êtes intéressé à l'avoir dans vos rangs?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: La première étape était de M. Khan après les événements à Toronto l'été passé. Il nous a offert de nous aider pour les défis que cette situation présente comme un Canadien musulman. Il veut coopérer avec le gouvernement pour améliorer la position des musulmans au sein du Canada, au même temps de s'opposer au terrorisme. C'est important. C'est important pour nous tous. Comme j'ai dit depuis, je ne peux pas dire que c'est moi ou c'est lui qui a décidé à la fin de nous joindre, je peux dire que peut-être c'était la décision de M. Dion. C'est M. Dion qui a décidé cette semaine de dire publiquement que Wajid Khan ne peut pas rester un député libéral et aider un gouvernement national conservateur, et c'est sa décision. C'est à cause de ça, je pense que M. Khan était forcé de faire un choix et il a fait son choix.

And I can say the same thing again in English. As you know, once again, and I think Wajid expressed various reasons why he's very comfortable with the Conservative government, what it's been doing for new Canadians, but more particularly as you know the first step was when he

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approached me after the arrests in Toronto last summer. As a Muslim Canadian, wants to see Muslim Canadians play a full role in this country. At the same time, wanted to do what he could to help the government deal with what are obviously challenges. I thought it was a very good step on his part. I didn't ask him to join the Conservative Party. He wasn't asking to join the Conservative Party. He asked to help, and I suppose somewhere along the line we both got comfortable with the idea of him being a Conservative, but in the end the choice was made by Mr. Dion. Mr. Dion said publicly that Mr. Khan had to make up his mind. You couldn't be a true Liberal and participate positively in the government of Canada. Well, Mr. Khan as a consequence has made his choice, and the choice is clear today.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Continue with Roger Smith, CTV.

REPORTER: I'd like to follow up on that with Mr. Khan. The Prime Minister has explained why you've made your final decision, but could we hear it from you? You made your decision to serve an advisor while the Liberals were in the middle of a leadership race. What did the choice, how did the choice of Stéphane Dion influence you, and had you made your mind up before he delivered what might have been seen as an ultimatum yesterday, or did that cause you to come to the Prime Minister today?

WAJID KHAN: Well, over the past six months I started working with the Prime Minister, and we had many conversations about the issues in the Middle East and Afghanistan. I gave them my perspective, gave him my perspectives, and we discussed many other issues related to government of Canada, national security, foreign affairs, and I realized that there is political chemistry between the Prime Minister and myself. He gives me the opportunity, and I thank you again, sir, to have a very frank and open

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dialogue, and I respect Mr. Dion, but I feel Canada needs a leader, and that leader is Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: We'll continue...

REPORTER About your decision yesterday, how his ultimatum... The Prime Minister said that the ultimatum yesterday caused you to leave the Liberal Party. Could you tell us if that is true?

WAJID KHAN: Well, the Prime...Mr. Dion has gone public with statements. He did not talk to me over the last one month. However, as I said, to me when I'm given a choice to choose between a political party or my country, I will always choose Canada, and that's why I chose the Conservative government.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Emmanuelle Latraverse, Radio-Canada.

JOURNALISTE: M. Harper, d'une part à vous, à quoi est-ce que la présence de M. Khan vous croyez va vous aider à tendre la main à la communauté musulmane au Canada, parce que vos politiques quand-même ont suscité beaucoup d'inquiétudes dans plusieurs parties de la communauté musulmane au pays, d'une part.

Et Mr. Khan, I understand you were scheduled to meet with Mr. Dion this afternoon. Why didn't you wait to meet with him before you made your decision?

TR. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Je peux ajouter comme n'importe quelle communauté, la communauté musulmane a certaines idées en commun avec le gouvernement conservateur, certains qui sont différentes, peut-être. Ce n'est pas une communauté. Il y a plusieurs groupes de musulmans. Par exemple, M. Jaffer, Rahim Jaffer, le député d'Edmonton-

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Strathcona est un conservateur qui est musulman aussi. Il est musulman de... de...musulman chi'ite. M. Khan est musulman sunni. Il y a des autres différences, mais je pense aussi que Wajid s'est exprimé aussi son désir d'aider le gouvernement dans la région, de la région de Toronto et dans certains autres dossiers importants pour ses commettants.

JOURNALISTE: Why didn't you wait to meet with Mr. Dion this afternoon? I understand you were scheduled to meet with him.

WAJID KHAN: Well, as the Prime Minister said earlier, Mr. Dion, some of the media has already reported what he intends to ask me, ask of me, and again today, said the same thing, said the ride is over. Either you choose between being a special advisor or come back to the Liberal Party. And I think our commitments overseas are of far greater importance to me, and therefore I wasn't left any choice.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Continue with Hannah Boudreau, Global Television.

REPORTER: I just wanted to go back on the timeline questions. We haven't really got it clarified. Mr. Khan first, when did you clearly decide that you were going over to the Conservatives? And Mr. Harper, how do you feel that Mr. Khan's presence in your caucus will help you in the next election campaign? And do you feel that it might hurt you from your constituents in the next election?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well I'll let Wajid answer about his constituents. As I've said, the decision is, you know, taken officially today. We've really decided it in the last couple of days, but I think it's probably fair to say that over the last little while, that Wajid and myself were getting more comfortable with this idea. But I say, Mr. Dion has really

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in a sense forced a choice, so the choice has been made, and I think people in Mississauga-Streetsville and the people of the GTA will ultimately benefit enormously from having a voice in the government.

REPORTER: (Inaudible) do you fear that in the next election campaign, that you might feel repercussions from your constituency?

WAJID KHAN: Well, I think the constituents will decide as to how effective I have been and how I have served my country, and I'll leave that determination to them.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: We'll continue with Romeo St. Martin, Politics Watch.

REPORTER: Yes, Mr. Khan you said in your opening statement that the Conservative Party has a realistic foreign policy. I'm wondering, do you have concerns...was one of your factors concerns with Mr. Dion's policy on Afghanistan, and did you make that note to the people in the Liberal Party?

WAJID KHAN: Could you tell me a little bit more about Mr. Dion's foreign policy, because I haven't heard anything from him. All I know is that he did say that he will not support the Bloc Québécois stance on Afghanistan. And at the same time, I was disappointed that he has gone public on the issue of not letting me do exactly the patriotic thing that I was planning on doing in Afghanistan.

REPORTER: (Inaudible) Afghanistan policy?

WAJID KHAN: I haven't spoken to him on it. I offered to help him on it and I never got a call back, unfortunately.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: We'll continue with Alan Woods, Toronto Star. Right this way.

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REPORTER: I wonder what Mr. Khan, as Prime Minister's special advisor on Middle Eastern and Central Asian affairs for the last six months, what are the problems that we're facing in Afghanistan? Why aren't we seeing a greater or more timely success in Afghanistan.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: I'm not sure, in fairness, that Wajid has been to that area yet. He has a trip planned in the near future, and maybe we'll be able to elaborate on that little bit, a little bit in the future.

REPORTER: In that case, then, perhaps...you have been to the Middle East. And I wonder what your assessment...how can Canada boost its presence on the world stage, particularly in the Middle East? What is your assessment...can you sum up your report?

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: (Inaudible)

WAJID KHAN: Well, Middle East is a very complex issue, and you know, over the course of the last little while, I think the Canadians need to understand, we have a very simplistic approach to Middle East. It is not strictly an Israeli-Palestinian issue. That is the core issue. However, there are other players in the Middle East. We have the moderate states, and we have the rise of Iran and Syria and Hezbollah, and so that's why it is an extremely complex issue, and we need to watch it continuously and engage, because the ground reality changes in Middle East all the time.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: We have time for one last question.
Terry Pedwell, Broadcast News.

REPORTER: Prime Minister, I'm just wondering, if you were in opposition and one of your MPs was advising the government of the time, whoever that might be, would you allow one of your MPs without consequence to advise the government without any consequence at all?

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Can't say. We never faced that situation. You know, we always took a view in opposition that, and I took a view myself that I was always willing to provide advice to my counterpart, the Prime Minister, if he asked me. Mr. Chrétien never asked me. Mr. Martin did ask me on occasion to give him some advice, and occasionally I did. You know, as I say, I think we've faced the special circumstance where I think all Canadians were shaken by the developments last summer. Mr. Khan obviously because of who he is had a special ability to aid the government of Canada on what was an issue and is an issue of national importance, and my approach as Prime Minister – I'm not opposition leader – my approach as Prime Minister, as you know from day one has been to make very clear that we are prepared to reach across party lines to work with people who share common values with us. The issue is not partisanship. The issue is whether we share common objectives, and my view is that those who share common objectives with the government should work with the government. People who don't share common objectives, you know, the Bloc Québécois clearly has fundamentally different objectives, the NDP has a different, fundamentally different philosophy than the government on many things, but those Members of Parliament who do share common objectives, I'm anxious to work with them. And you know, it's Mr. Dion who said that you have to, everything has to be divided, you know, rigidly down party lines; that's not my view.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Thank you very...

REPORTER: (Inaudible) to give the government their best advice no matter what political stripe?

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RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Well, I think that as Parliamentarians, I think the public hopes that we're all here for the betterment of the country. They all know we have our partisan interests, but they hope that we're able to combine our partisan interests with the best interest of the country. I think what the public doesn't understand is if people agree on something, why they don't work together. I think the public can understand that if you disagree, you take different positions, you work in different parties, but I don't think people understand why if you actually agree you should constantly attack the other guy anyway. So that's, you know, I think those are maybe questions for some in the opposition to answer rather than myself.

DIMITRI SOUDAS: Thank you very much everybody.
Merci beaucoup.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER: Great, thanks.

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