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PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT MANNING CENTRE
CONFERENCE

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(APPLAUSE)

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Bonsoir, good evening everybody. First of all, I want to thank Preston for that introduction and also for this opportunity to speak to the annual networking conference of the Manning Centre for Building Democracy. I just want to begin with a word about Preston. He probably didn't mention this to you, but his political accomplishments were recognized last year by the Governor General naming him as a Companion of the Order of Canada, and...

(APPLAUSE) There are many reasons why this is true, but one is obviously, if one were making a short list of the founding fathers of modern Canadian conservatism, I would say no matter how short the list was, Preston's name would be on it, and of course...go ahead. (APPLAUSE) And of course, through this centre, he is continuing to lay important groundwork for the future of our country.

Mesdames et messieurs, ça fait trois ans que le conservatisme est au pouvoir à Ottawa, et au cours de cette période, je suis fier de dire qu'on a agi pour réaliser notre programme.

I'm here tonight, ladies and gentlemen, to talk to you about something Preston alluded to and something I'm sure will be part of your own conversations, and that's the fact that it has been three years since conservatism has come to power in Ottawa, and we are now Conservatives governing in a very unusual time, Conservatives governing in a period of failure in the global marketplace. I have called my remarks tonight "Between Wall Street and the Welfare State". It's what I want to talk to you a little bit about. In the three years since we've come to power, I'm proud to say that we

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have been acting on our agenda, and do not forget that this has made a real difference to where our country would otherwise be headed. For example, instead of using federal surpluses to dole out money to Liberal client groups, we cut taxes and we paid \$40 billion off the national debt. Instead of a big bureaucratic national daycare plan, we are delivering direct support to families so they can make their own childcare choices. (APPLAUSE)

Au lieu de s'immiscer dans les affaires des provinces, on respecte le partage de compétences prévues dans la constitution.

Instead of subsidizing court challenges by left-wing fringe groups, we're cracking down on criminals and providing support to victims. Instead... (APPLAUSE) Instead of chanting high-minded slogans, we are vigorously promoting freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law on the world stage. Instead of sitting on our hands when our allies are in peril, instead of polling the general assembly of the United Nations, we are taking principled, unequivocal positions in international affairs. (APPLAUSE) Instead of leaving the true North unattended and unprotected, we are taking real action to assert Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic. Instead of plundering the defence budget and always asking the Canadian Forces to do more with less, we are giving our brave men and women in uniform the resources they need and the respect they deserve. (APPLAUSE) And I know you're going to...you're going to acknowledge him later, but give a big hand to what a great job the outgoing Chief of the Defence Staff did; General Rick Hillier is here. (APPLAUSE)

I could go on, friends, but perhaps it would be simpler to just imagine how different things would have been if the Liberal left had remained in power over the past three years. Imagine the bloated bureaucracy

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their daycare program would have spawned, and of course how little daycare it would have delivered, imagine the stance Canada would have taken when Hezbollah and Hamas terrorists attacked Israel, imagine how many Liberal insiders and ideologues would now be in the Senate, the courts, and countless other federal institutions and agencies – I should say how many more. (LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE) Imagine the cost of going through with the Kyoto and Kelowna Accords with no plan to actually achieve anything on either the environment or aboriginal affairs. For that matter, imagine if you can what a carbon tax would be doing to our economy in the middle of this global recession. Friends, the Conservative government has made a big difference in this country, and we should never forget it. (APPLAUSE)

Ça ne veut pas dire, chers amis, qu'on n'a pas fait de compromis en tant que gouvernement. En fait, les compromis sont une conséquence inévitable lorsqu'on gouverne, lorsqu'on fait face aux réalités des familles, des entreprises, des communautés. Et en tant que gouvernement, on doit accepter de tels compromis parce que le conservatisme n'est pas une idéologie; c'est plutôt un système de valeurs inspirées par la réalité et par de l'expérience.

This is not to say, friends, that we haven't made compromises while in government. Indeed, compromises are an inevitable consequence of governing. I'm not talking about compromises about principles or ethics, compromises in the name of expediency or opportunity. I'm talking about compromises that have to do with facing reality. I'm not talking – when I say that, by the way, I'm not talking about the reality of a minority Parliament. I would never use "Parliament" and "reality" in the same sentence. (LAUGHTER) When I talk about making compromises to address

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reality, I'm talking about compromises that address the reality in the lives of real people, the families, communities and businesses. And as Conservatives, these are the kinds of compromises we should not fear. In fact, we should welcome them, because unlike various forms of liberalism, conservatism is a values system, not an ideology. It is a values system based on reality, on the realism of experience, not on abstract blueprints for society. Modern Liberals, for example, tend to believe that the solution to all problems lies in more government. In fact, if a solution doesn't involve more government, today's Liberals dismiss it as not acting at all. On the other hand, an older form of liberal, who we now sometimes call Libertarian, believe that the solution to all problems lay in less government; more specifically, they believe in individual freedom, the freedom from government, the freedom that does in fact underlie the market economy.

Now, individual freedom is something we as Conservatives value, but it is not the only thing we value, because our values system, like reality, is a bit deeper than that. And reality, my friends, is something we cannot lose sight of as we are in government faced with and entrusted with guiding our country through the most challenging economic times the world has seen in many generations. Conservatives don't believe that big government, that the welfare state is the solution to all problems; that is true. We didn't believe it before this recession. We're not about to start believing it now. But neither can Conservatives believe today that the marketplace, that what I call Wall Street, is the solution to all problems. We are in a global recession principally – and we have to face this – principally because of Wall Street, because a lot of people on Wall Street, financiers, business people, but a lot of people in the private sector more generally,

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homeowners, consumers, pushed or bought into a very unconservative idea, that they could live beyond their means. Regulators may have failed to prevent it, governments probably made it worse, but it was in the end a failure of the private sector to live according to the values we as Conservatives know to be true. Thankfully, Canadians among few nations in the Western world did not embrace this idea so recklessly. Our banks upheld prudent lending standards. Our regulators maintained sufficient but not excessive oversight. Our consumers exercised more restraint, and our government made affordable tax reductions, tax reductions that did not drive us into a long-term deficit. Nevertheless, as part of a global market, we too as Canadians find ourselves in recession. So what do we do now? We do what we are doing. As Conservatives, we pursue policies that reflect the underlying wisdom of our values while adapting them to the reality of our circumstances.

Aujourd'hui nous en tant que conservateurs, on utilise le gouvernement pour agir de façon temporaire et abordable pour faire face à la réalité d'un échec massif du marché.

We are as Conservatives, in response to massive failure in the marketplace, using the public role of government to act. Friends, when billions, maybe trillions of dollars of private capital are sidelined, sitting on the sidelines because of fear, pessimism and panic, the government must step in to restore confidence, to protect citizens, to stimulate the economy. Remember how we are stepping in, that the expenditures we are making as Conservatives are, for the most part, targeted and temporary, and that the purposes for which we are making them are, for the most part, of a long-term nature: infrastructure, research, education. And yes, we are borrowing money to do that. As experience tells us, government is supposed to when during a severe

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recession like this the risk is not inflation but deflation, and interest rates are so close to zero that the cost...that the cost for government in borrowing is virtually zero. And my friends, don't let anyone tell you that the opposition, that toxic coalition brew (LAUGHTER) of Liberals, socialists and separatists...you know, I've always wished they would do that, and Dion finally did it! (LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE) Don't let anybody tell you they would have done the same things.

L'opposition était très claire sur ce qu'elle aurait fait. Ils n'auraient proposé aucune réduction de taxes et d'impôts. Ils l'ont dit. La dépense aurait été permanente et non temporaire, et ces dépenses auraient profité principalement aux groupes d'intérêt de la gauche, pas aux Canadiens ordinaires, aux travailleurs, familles et ni aux communautés.

The opposition made it very clear what they would have done. They would not have brought in any tax reduction at all. They said so. They didn't tell you the taxes they would raise. We're seeing that in the States now. But they wouldn't have brought in any tax reductions at all. Their spending plans would have been permanent, not temporary, and that spending would have gone mainly to left-wing special interest groups, not to long-term purposes, not to ordinary, hardworking Canadian families and communities. Friends, do not forget that Conservatives being in power has made an enormous difference in how this crisis is being handled. (APPLAUSE)

And also do not forget, because we certainly will not forget, that once the global economy begins to recover, the primary wealth creation of the future will come principally from the private marketplace, from a well-regulated private marketplace, yes, but in an irreversibly globalized economy, from the marketplace just the same. And we are putting this country

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in a good position, the best position for that world of the future. Unlike our friends to the south, we are cutting taxes, not raising them. Unlike a future in which virtually every other country is nationalizing part of its banking sector, Canada's banking sector will be exclusively private. Having made long... critical long-term investments, we will still be one of the few countries returning to budgetary surplus. By our nature, we will always vigorously defend trade and resist protectionism, and we will still have the enormous endowment of resources with which our land has been blessed.

En fait, mes amis, dans le Canada de demain, on pourrait avoir l'une des économies les plus capitalistes et les plus prospères de la planète.

In fact, my friends, in the Canada of the future, we can aim for; in fact, we should be able to have one of the most free enterprise, one of the most prosperous societies on the planet right here in Canada. (APPLAUSE) Now, that would, of course, in these dangerous times, require us to maintain a Conservative government and to govern according to Conservative values, so I go back for a second. I do want to address that. What exactly are those Conservative values? I think we all instinctively recognize them when we see them, although it is sometimes difficult to define them. I like to summarize my idea of conservatism in three Fs: freedom, family and faith. Individual freedom, political and economic, is one of our fundamental values. It is absolutely critical, but it must be tempered. First, individual freedom must be tempered by family, by the knowledge that one's life is more important than one's self, that we are part of a chain in which we honour and build upon those who came before us and in which we hope and look out for the future of those who will come after us. Second, freedom must

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be tempered by faith, or more broadly by what faith in all its forms teaches, that there is a right and wrong beyond mere opinion or desire. Most importantly, it teaches us that freedom is not an end in itself, that how freedom is exercised matters as much as freedom itself. Freedom must be used well, and freedom can only be sustained if it is used well. Now, I know the libertarian – and I'm sure there are a few in this room who define themselves that way – the libertarian says, and it's a perspective I have a lot of sympathy for. The libertarian says, "Let individual exercise full freedom and take full responsibility for their actions." The problem with this notion, as Conservatives know from experience, is that people who act irresponsibly in the name of freedom are almost never willing to take responsibility for their actions. I don't speak just of individuals who may have ruined their lives through drugs or crime or whatever. But look at Wall Street, the great free enterprise global financial institutions who wanted so much freedom from government regulation. They were the first in line for government support when the recession hit. And now I read, I read yesterday that now some of them are saying they don't like that this government money may limit their freedom. (LAUGHTER)

Donc je vous le dis encore, mes amis, pour les conservateurs, ce n'est pas seulement la liberté qui compte. On doit avoir aussi les politiques pour assurer que cette liberté engendre les bons choix, des choix responsables qui vont bénéficier à tout le monde.

So I say again my friends, to Conservatives it cannot be just about freedom. It must be about policies that help ensure freedom will lead to good choices, to responsible choices in the economy, to prosperous choices with wider benefits to all of us. Now, friends, I am not here to tell you

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that everything we are doing as a government is perfect. We are operating in a very difficult political and economic environment. Options are limited. Risk is everywhere, in everything we are doing, but I can tell you the following, that we are on the right track, that the other guys would take us off that track, and that we can stay on the right track if we continue to work together. We... (APPLAUSE) We as Conservatives inherit an incredible legacy. Never forget, we forget this sometimes listening to the CBC... (LAUGHTER) that it was Conservatives who created our Confederation, one of the most lasting political democratic arrangements in history. In my grandparents' era under Winston Churchill, conservatives rallied the world against fascism. In my parents' under leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, conservatives brought down the iron curtain, and in our generation, we have united Canadian Conservatives under one roof and brought down an entrenched Liberal Party that was deemed an unstoppable juggernaut just five years ago. (APPLAUSE) Now, as I said at the outset, we find ourselves in office faced with great economic challenges, with instability world markets unseen in 80 years. But as all previous crises have shown, it is only conservatism, rooted in enduring values and guided by real world experience that will allow us to deal with those challenges, and with your help, I have no doubt we will succeed. I want to thank you once again for having me tonight. I wish you all the best on your conference. Merci beaucoup. God bless your work. God bless Canada. (APPLAUSE)

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