



Prime Minister Stephen Harper's speech at caucus and with media

Parliament Hill - February 7, 2006 - 10:04 AM - 8 minutes 49 seconds

(Background noise)

RAHIM JAFFER (Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Strathcona and National Caucus Chair): Alright ladies and gentlemen. It looks like we have the media here, so we're gonna get today's program underway. I just want to reintroduce myself. My name is Rahim Jaffer, Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Strathcona and the National Caucus Chair, so it's a great pleasure to be able to work with you this morning.

(CHEERING) Before I turn over the mike to our Prime Minister, I'd just like to congratulate Norman Doyle, who was the past caucus chair. From what I understand, Norm had an accident, an unfortunate accident. He was, I guess, walking to work or something and slipped and fell and really hurt his head and broke his leg, apparently. He's in hospital, apparently, getting that dealt with, but from what I understand he's okay. So if, at some point during the day if some of you want to check in and see how

he's doing, I'm sure he'll appreciate it, but if we can give him a round of applause, he was a great caucus chair, and we appreciated the work he did. (APPLAUSE) Maintenant je vais donner le micro à notre nouveau premier ministre. Now I'll turn it over to our new Prime Minister Stephen Harper, leader of the new government! (APPLAUSE AND CHEERING)

STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Thank you very much. Thank you very much everybody for that tremendous welcome. Gee, I'm already starting to discover the power of appointment. (LAUGHTER) First of all, congratulations to all of you. Félicitations on your, not just your election, in many cases your first election, your reelection, but also every single one of you for a tremendous team effort that we ran from one end of this country to the other. (APPLAUSE) Et surtout mes félicitations aux nouveaux élus du Québec et surtout des 10 élus, et aussi le sénateur Pierre-Claude Nolin pour sa présidence de notre effort au Québec. Nous avons maintenant un vrai gouvernement national.

(APPLAUDISSEMENTS) And finally I'd like to welcome the two newest members of our caucus, and to reiterate their presence here is a sign of one thing: my determination to make sure this government we have the strongest national government possible. So welcome to David Emerson and Michael Fortier for joining our team. (APPLAUSE) And one more

congratulations, my friends. Someone, as you know, who was co-president of our election campaign, did not seek reelection, but as you all know, has been a dear colleague to many of us, particularly a great friend and advisor to myself. He has had a distinguished career in the House of Commons, long-time member, at one time, leader of the Opposition. He was also in the British Columbia legislature, a cabinet minister, and also the speaker of the legislative assembly. And yesterday, it was an oversight, but later, that he wasn't done early in the day, but yesterday, in the day, I swore John Reynolds into the Privy Council, so welcome the Honourable John Reynolds. (APPLAUSE) Now friends, as you know, we have a clear program with clear priorities and we will be moving ahead on these vigorously in the weeks to come and ready to go when Parliament resumes on April 3. Yesterday I introduced the cabinet, which, as you know, is balanced and capable, but also a smaller and more focussed cabinet so that executive government can work more smoothly and get things done. But I want to be clear. As I said to your cabinet colleagues yesterday, I said that people who are in cabinet have more responsibility. But everyone in caucus, every elected member of this caucus, has equal power. And this is where the real power will be. Yesterday, a cabinet minister asked me – in fact, a couple of them asked before we left the

meeting – they said, “How long do we have for the cabinet meeting, because we have to give a time for our officials to get together and have meetings?” My instructions were this, my friends, and always remember this and remind your cabinet colleagues of this. My instructions are you will meet with your caucus as long as is necessary, and if you have to keep your officials waiting, you’ll do that because your first responsibility is always to the caucus. (APPLAUSE) Now I’m just gonna make, end by making one brief announcement that I know is of particular concern in the province of British Columbia. And I just want to do it while the media are here, and you’re all here, and that is to let you know that we took some decisions yesterday in cabinet. Some of those were announced. I want you to know that last night I signed the order terminating the planned sale of the Ridley Terminal and giving the management the authority to go ahead with long-term business. (APPLAUSE) So now, as much as we love having all of you, we’re throwing you out so we can get on with the real business of the country. (LAUGHTER) Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE)

JAFFER: So if I could ask our friends, our dear friends in the media to leave now, we’d really appreciate it. Thank you very much. We’ll just wait a few moments as they make their way out.

(Background noise)

– 30 –