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**PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT AT BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE**

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PETER VAN LOAN (Minister of International Trade):

All right, thank you. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I wanted to welcome you, our distinguished guests, here to this business roundtable in Davos. I'm Peter Van Loan, Canada's Minister of International Trade. I apologize for my somewhat informal attire, but my clothes have been held hostage by the Prime Minister's crew. They're on their way (inaudible). In any event, I thank you for taking the time, because this is...obviously your time is very valuable and this event is very important, but your input here is important. Canada of course has a very good economic track record now relative to others in the current global economic challenges we face. We've had less of a dip than just about every other major country. We're coming out of...we're in the process now, I think, I hope, of coming out of this economic downturn with some impressive stats. We'll have the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Productivity is growing. We haven't experienced some of the kind of unemployment we've seen other (inaudible), and we have a very good business environment, heading to the lowest business taxes in 2012 in the G7. So these are all good reasons to invest in Canada, from our perspective, but we want to hear some of your perspectives on the prospects for investing in Canada, barriers that you may face, how we can further enhance investment opportunities, and I know that we want to very much engage and encourage the private sector in that regard. I know the Prime Minister wants to, and I have the honour now of introducing to you the man who has been successfully leading that very strong economic performance vis-à-vis others, and I will point out the IMF just predicted that Canada will lead the G7 in economic growth for the next two years. So, which I think is testimony to the strong

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leadership that Prime Minister Harper has shown. So without further ado, I turn it over to you, Prime Minister.

RT. HON. STEPHEN HARPER (Prime Minister of Canada): Well, thank you, Minister Van Loan, and first of all, let me just say how much we really do appreciate such a distinguished group taking a few minutes to discuss important issues with us today. I think we'll probably focus our discussions obviously on whatever you want to talk about, but three things that I really have in mind. The first is obviously to exchange views on the state of the global economy going forward. Closely related to that, as you know, Canada is hosting the next G20 summit as well as the next G8 summit, where we believe that obviously these economic issues and other issues will be discussed. So any thoughts you have on that process going forward would be helpful. And finally, we'll obviously want to discuss, as Minister Van Loan already has, some of the strengths of the Canadian economy, the investment climate in Canada. We think we have a pretty good story to tell, but we're always interested as well in your input and suggestions in terms of future policy work. So once again, thank you for your time and I look forward to our discussions. (Inaudible)

DIMITRI SOUDAS (Press Secretary to the Prime Minister): Thanks everybody. Thanks very much.

PETER VAN LOAN: (Inaudible) – thanks very much, everybody – is to go around the room...

587 words

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