

“The best country in the world”

In his victory speech in Calgary on May 2, Stephen Harper was speaking for the first time as the leader of a majority government, and acknowledged that it was his role and responsibility to lead a government of all Canadians, including those who didn't vote for him, especially in Quebec.

Dans son discours de la victoire prononcé le soir du 2 mai à Calgary, Stephen Harper s'exprimait pour la première fois en tant que chef d'un gouvernement majoritaire et a reconnu qu'il lui incombait de gouverner pour tous les Canadiens, incluant ceux qui ne l'ont pas appuyé, notamment au Québec.

Quelle belle soirée, what a great night. And friends, I have to say it: a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government. Friends, great things are only accomplished by many people, by many people working together.

Politics is a team sport. It's always what I've said and it's true. For Laureen and me, there's one thing that has always been clear: we can always count on our home team, the riding association of Calgary Southwest. Even when we're not able to be with you, to be there with you, you're with us, and you are with us all the way. And I want to thank you again for the fifth time in nine years to the voters of Calgary Southwest for returning me to the House of Commons.

Thanks also to our national team in Ottawa and on the road, everybody working those exhausting hours. You can all take credit, take all the credit for the great things that have happened tonight, and have a great celebration. I also want to take a moment to thank all of our candidates who were not successful. You have nevertheless made a real contribution to our great Conservative victory tonight. And thanks to the tens of thousands of Conservatives from coast to coast to coast who have given so much of your time and so generously of your donations and your prayers. You are our strength. You are our inspiration. You are our conscience.

My friends, this has been a long five weeks. There has been much passionate debate and a tremendous amount of hard work on all sides, but it's done. Canadians can now turn the page on the uncertainties and repeat elections of the past seven years and focus on building a great future for all of us.

At the end of it all, Canadians made this critically important decision today, friends. They chose hope, hope, unity of purpose, and a strong Canada, and because Canadians chose hope, we can now begin to come together again as we must, as Canadians, as fellow citizens, friends and neighbours. For our part, we are intensely aware that we are and we must be the government of all Canadians, including those who did not vote for us.

And friends, hear me on this: all the lessons of the past few years holding to our principles, but also of listening, of caring, of adapting those lessons that have come with a minority government, we must continue to practise as a majority government. We are grateful, deeply honoured, in fact, humbled by the decisive endorsement of so many Canadians. We shall be faithful to the trust that you have reposed in us.

Whether or not you cast a vote for our party, our government must and will stand on guard for all regions, and friends, we shall do that faithfully.

Friends, we have much to do if we are to promptly deliver what Canadians have voted for. That is why

the business of government will resume tomorrow. Our first job will to implement what we set out in our budget, our plan for jobs and growth, our plan to create jobs and growth without raising your taxes.

Our second priority is to deliver on our program of support for our families and for the senior citizens of this country.

Third, we will continue with our plan to eliminate the deficit while growing the transfers to our provinces by 6 percent a year for the health care system in which Canadians believe.

And fourth, we will at long last pass comprehensive measures to reduce crime and make our streets and neighbourhoods safer.

Now I should like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to my opponents, all of whom conducted honourable campaigns. Our disagreements do not blind us to their commitment to our society and our democratic process.

First, I think I can speak for the entire country in recognizing the determination and tenacity of Mr. Layton and his remarkable campaign. This is a day, friends, for which the NDP has long worked. Mr. Layton should feel proud, and I look forward to working with him in Ottawa. Mr. Ignatieff has been a passionate advocate for the cause of his party, a party which has made great and important contributions to the development of this country. I extend to him



Jason Ransom

The Harper family waves to the crowd on election night in Calgary. "I have to say it," Harper declared, " a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government."

the high regard that is due of a worthy opponent.

I would also like to salute Mr. Duceppe, for whom I've always had great respect, even though we have substantial differences in views of our country.

To Ms. May, Elizabeth May as well, congratulations for the historic victory. No win is more noteworthy for any political party than its very first.

I should also like to congratulate every Canadian who took the brave decision to run for office. I have been on both the winning and losing sides of campaigns, and I admire you all, and of course, I look forward to working with all of those, all of you who won your seats in the House of Commons tonight.

This is what democracy needs. This is what citizenship is all about: the way that we choose our government, how we reconcile our differences, the manner in which we then

live by the decisions. Our Canadian political life is sometimes turbulent, but is nonetheless a thing of beauty, and the envy of peoples who have yet to achieve it. It is, friends, without a doubt a big part of what makes this country, Canada, in a troubled world an island of security and stability.

Friends, I have to say this again; I've said it repeatedly during this campaign. Travelling around our great country, one gets a sense of its still greater potential. Nothing, not recession, not natural disaster, nor war, have ever stopped the rise of this country. There is a spirit in this land, the true spirit, the true character of the Canadian people, a compassionate neighbour, a courageous warrior, a confident partner; that's the spirit of the Canada I know. Canadians are proud of that spirit, and they trust us to live by that spirit.

Fellow Canadians, my pledge to you is that the government I have the

honour to lead will bind itself to these values, and the government you elected today will be a government that keeps these principles at its heart, at its very core.

Friends, it is time to go home, but before we do, I will just say this: five years ago, we began to build the Canada that would be truly strong and free, the true North of our national anthem. That work is well begun, and it is within our grasp to make that dream come true, to become a country that is as prosperous, as united and as strong as it can be, the best country in the world, but always striving to be more. That is the work to which we dedicate ourselves, that great endeavour to which we return tomorrow.

Excerpted from a speech to the Canadian people in Calgary on May 2, 2011. Stephen Harper is Prime Minister of Canada.