

## **Prime Minister Stephen Harper announces additional funding for aid in Afghanistan**

February 26, 2007  
Ottawa, Ontario

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Minister Verner,  
Ambassador Samad,  
Colleagues,  
Members of the Afghan-Canadian community,

Thank you all for being here.  
And a special welcome to Chris Alexander and James Appathurai, who were just introduced.

They will both be making a number of appearances in the media and before parliamentary committees in the coming days.

I urge Canadians to listen closely.

These gentlemen know Afghanistan, its people, and their challenges, and they understand what's at stake for the region and the world.

As Chris Alexander noted a few months ago, "Afghanistan is a long way from home, but the issues we are addressing here – building democracy, reducing poverty, fighting terrorism, celebrating pluralism – matter for the entire world."

Canada's New Government fully agrees.

Canada's involvement and sacrifices in Afghanistan serve our national interests and values on several levels. It's not just about foreign aid, though that's part of it.

It's not just about doing our duty with the United Nations and our NATO allies, though that too is part of it.

And it's not just about living up to our beliefs in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, though that most certainly is part of it too.

But as Chris Alexander has frequently pointed out, global security hinges on success in Afghanistan.

If we fail in Afghanistan, if that country relapses into anarchy and once again becomes a haven for extremists and terrorists, the world will be manifestly more dangerous.

Afghanistan is the front line of the international security challenge of the modern, post-Cold War world.

We must build a successful alternative there in order to defeat extremism and

terrorism everywhere.

Obviously, a secure, democratic, economically viable Afghanistan isn't going to materialize tomorrow, but through a concerted, multi-lateral, multi-faceted effort, it is achievable.

We will continue to support the brave men and women of the Canadian forces in their valiant efforts to secure and stabilize the volatile southern region.

Thanks to their efforts, the fragile peace that reigns over most of the country has been extended to large parts of Kandahar province.

Now it's time to consolidate those security gains on the ground and use them to advance reconstruction, because the long-suffering Afghan people desperately need hope for a better future for their families and communities.

That's what our announcement is about today.

Last May, we obtained parliamentary approval for an additional \$310 million for aid and development in Afghanistan, bringing the total to \$1 billion through 2011.

Today our government is deepening Canada's commitment to Afghanistan with a major infusion of new trust funds to accelerate the reconstruction and development process.

The majority of these funds will support proven Afghan national programs which:

- promote rural development and encourage community involvement in project selection and design;
- pay salaries of teachers, health workers and police to ensure that basic government services are provided; and
- provide micro-credit to help the Afghan people start small businesses to support their families and build their communities.

Today's initiative will also nurture economic growth through the construction of a major road to facilitate cross-border trade.

In addition, the new funding will:

- further advance demining efforts; and
- help build Afghanistan's counter-narcotics infrastructure.

Through today's announcement, our government is consolidating and enhancing the security gains Canada and our allies have made in Afghanistan.

Those gains will be outlined in a progress report authored by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, National Defence, and International Cooperation, which will be tabled in the House this afternoon by Minister MacKay.

The report fulfills a commitment we made last spring – when the House voted to extend the mission – to keep Canadians fully informed.

It provides a complete picture of what we've accomplished so far and the

challenges that lie ahead.

We believe Canadians will agree that now is the time for our soldiers, aid workers, civilian police and diplomats to redouble their efforts, to help rebuild the physical, economic, social and governmental infrastructure that will put Afghanistan on the road to lasting peace and prosperity.

This part of the mission is no less difficult and no less important than the security aspect, and its success is no less critical to the long-term recovery of Afghanistan and the stability of the world.

As I said in my speech to the UN General Assembly last fall, Canada and the UN are acting as one in Afghanistan.

The UN's challenge is our challenge.

With Chris Alexander, a fellow Canadian, providing leadership on the ground, with our troops continuing to expand the secure areas in the Kandahar region, and with our deeper commitment of aid for reconstruction and development, I believe we all have very good reason to be optimistic that progress will continue in the coming year.

Thank you.