

PETER MANSBRIDGE: SO PRIME MINISTER, IT'S UNUSUAL, THAT YOU START A YEAR END INTERVIEW AND BREAKING NEWS HAPPENS BUT HERE WE ARE WITH IT HAPPENING AND CANADA PLAYING A ROLE OF SOME DEGREE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND CUBA ON GETTING PRELIMINARY TALKS GOING FOR, FOR RESTORING RELATIONSHIP. WHAT WAS CANADA'S ROLE?

STEPHEN HARPER: Well look Peter, I tell people I don't want to exaggerate Canada's role. We facilitated places where the two countries could have a dialogue and explore ways of normalizing the relationship and that's what we did and we think it's a good development, probably an overdue development. I personally believe changes are coming in Cuba and this will facilitate those. But look, I'm pleased that the president acknowledged our role in this.

WELL YOU'RE SAYING WE JUST SORT OF SUPPLIED THE ROOMS WHERE THEY SAT AND TALKED, WE WEREN'T IN THE TALKS?

No, no, we were not, we were not trying in any way to direct or mediate the talks. We were just trying to make sure that they had the opportunity to have the kind of dialogue they needed to have.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS COULD MEAN?

Well look I believe that change is coming to Cuba. There are some changes taking place there now. They're very slow but I think that's an economy and a society just overdue for entry into the 21st century and you know, time will tell but I think probably when the current generation of leadership passes you'll see some changes.

WELL THE ONE CONSTANT YOU'VE ALWAYS MADE IN REFERENCE TO CUBA IS THAT THEY GOTTA HAVE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENTS. ARE YOU LOOKING THAT FAR AHEAD?

Look I think other changes will probably occur before that but certainly one would hope we'll see that although we have some tainted democracies in the hemisphere, this is really the only place where there are elections that are completely non-competitive and it'll be nice to see that happen in Cuba and I think eventually it will.

YEAR END INTERVIEWS PEOPLE LOOK AT VERY CLOSELY FOR EXACTLY WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE DAY SAYS, ESPECIALLY SO IN A YEAR BEFORE AN ELECTION IS SCHEDULED. SO LET ME GET A COUPLE OF THOSE KIND OF QUESTIONS OUT OF THE WAY QUICKLY. OCTOBER 19TH, SHOULD WE ASSUME THAT IS WHEN THE ELECTION WILL BE OR IS THERE ANYTHING THAT COULD CHANGE THAT?

Well, I wouldn't say there's nothing that could change it but there's nothing on the horizon that I see changing that. We fixed that date and we're planning on it like everybody else.

SO WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT, OH HE'S GONNA GO IN THE SPRING, WE SHOULD IGNORE THAT?

Yeah you should and I always note that it's, it's either divining my mind or the comments of some anonymous so-called strategists somewhere whose existence I don't know of so I have no idea. I can honestly tell you we've had no discussion at any level of changing the date so I don't know where that's coming from.

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU PERSONALLY, BECAUSE THAT'S THE OTHER HALF OF THE EQUATION. WILL HE OR WON'T HE?

I see that sometimes too but I think I've been very clear for some time now but it's my intention to lead the party once again and, and look, I'm looking forward to the debate and I think we have a pretty good chance.

SO YOU'RE CLEARLY NOT SOMEBODY WHO BELIEVES IN TERM LIMITS OF ANY KIND?

I think term limits are up to the voter. You know look Peter, the way I look at it is this, I still, you know I still love the job, I enjoy the job, I tell people I've got the best job in the best country in the world. I also think I have responsibilities. We've been in a, you know, a period of, as you know, profound economic uncertainty across the globe, you know, we've just had another wave of that with some recent developments and I think we've got the country on the right track but I'd like to take some more time to really put it on that track in a very permanent way.

I'VE SPENT THE LAST FEW DAYS LOOKING THROUGH SOME OF YOUR SPEECHES OVER THE TIME YOU'VE BEEN IN OFFICE, SINCE 2006, AND ONE OF THE CONSTANTS ONE SEES RIGHT FROM THE FIRST SPEECH YOU GAVE OVERSEAS IN ENGLAND IN 2006, WAS YOUR VISION OF CANADA AS AN ENERGY SUPER POWER.

Right.

NOW I WONDER HERE, EIGHT AND A HALF YEARS LATER ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THAT VISION BECAUSE AS YOU'VE ALWAYS SAID, YOU GOTTA BE ABLE TO GET YOUR PRODUCT TO MARKET. NOTHING HAS REALLY CHANGED ON THAT FRONT; THE PIPELINES THAT YOU'VE WANTED APPROVED AND BUILT HAVEN'T HAPPENED, EITHER AT HOME OR SOUTH OF THE BORDER, THE PRICE HAS COLLAPSED ON OIL. IS THE VISION STILL THERE OR IS IT A FAILED VISION?

Well look, what I tell people, and this is just a fact, Canada's obviously to begin with, probably the most, maybe the most energy secure country in the world. Whatever the energy mix of the future is, Canada will be a major supplier and Canada will be relatively energy secure and that of course remains the case and our exports of energy have continued to grow throughout this government. Obviously the diversification I'd like to see hasn't happened but you know, in fairness Peter, we don't, you know, as a government of Canada, we don't direct the marketplace and we don't kind of personally or as a government approve projects. That's ultimately done through a scientific and environmental evaluation process. Those processes are ongoing. I'm, I'm...

BUT ARE YOU FRUSTRATED BY THE FACT THAT HERE, ALL THESE YEARS LATER, IT HASN'T HAPPENED?

Well look, I think it's ultimately up to the marketplace. You know, I think the energy sector itself has, has had a pretty good run. The fact that there are now low oil prices has nothing to do with the government of Canada. As you know, we're an international marketplace and we just have to learn to manage through that. It will have some important effects both on the industry and on the country but look, I remain optimistic, there's lots of demand. Everywhere I go, elsewhere in the world, people want Canadian energy, people want Canadian oil, people would like to find out ways...

BUT IF YOU CAN'T GET IT TO THEM.

Well I think, I think it's inevitable that that will happen but there's the market process and there's a scientific evaluation process and those are directed by others.

WELL, ONE OF THE PEOPLE THAT IT IS DIRECTED BY, SOUTH OF THE BORDER, IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND ONE WONDERS, EVEN ON A DAY LIKE THIS VERY CLEARLY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CANADA AND THE U.S. HAS PAID OFF ON THE CUBA FRONT, BUT ONE WONDERS WHERE THE TWO OF YOU ARE ON, ON KEYSTONE, IN TERMS OF THE CONVERSATIONS YOU HAVE. I MEAN WE'VE WATCHED HIM, HE WAS EVEN ON LATE NIGHT TELEVISION IN THE STATES IN THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS BASICALLY MAKING FUN OF KEYSTONE IN SOME WAYS. BUT IT'S SUGGESTING, LISTEN I JUST, YOU KNOW, IT'S A PIPELINE ACROSS THE U.S. TO TAKE CANADIAN OIL TO OTHER MARKETS OVERSEAS AND THE NUMBER OF JOBS PERMANENT THAT IT CREATES IS MINIMUM. NOW WHEN YOU HEAR THAT, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Well look, he knows our position but what I would say Peter is the interesting debate there is not the debate between President Obama and Canada, it's the debate between President Obama and the American people who are overwhelmingly in favor of the project and whose own government evaluations and state department, etc. say very different things about the project in

terms of what it brings, in terms of jobs, energy security, I think the, and the environment frankly and I think that's all pretty clear. But look, the, the President has a role in this, the congress has a role in it and we'll continue to watch what is a, what is an interesting and often difficult political system in the United States. But you know, we have won the argument of public opinion across the board in the United States on this.

BUT DO YOU THINK IT'S UNLIKELY THAT KEYSTONE WILL BE APPROVED IN THE LIFE OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION?

I don't know that. I think we, I don't know that. We have a whole new congress with proponents now of Keystone overwhelmingly in charge in both parties.

BUT HE SAYS HE'LL VETO IT.

Time will tell. People say a lot of things when they're in negotiations. We'll see. I, I think that the logic of the project in terms of energy security, in terms of the economy and job creation and frankly in terms of the environmental considerations, the logic is overwhelming and the project will be approved eventually.

LET ME GET BACK TO THE PRICE QUESTION BECAUSE LAST WEEK YOU MADE SOME HEADLINES BY SAYING THAT, WHILE YOU STILL MAINTAINED YOUR PROMISE THAT AT SOME POINT, OIL, THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY WILL BE REGULATED, IT WOULD BE CRAZY TO BE DOING IT NOW WITH THE PRICE SOMEWHERE AROUND \$60 I THINK AT THE TIME, LOWER NOW. IF THAT'S A CRAZY PRICE, WHAT IS AN ACCEPTABLE PRICE?

Yeah well that's not quite what I said Peter. First of all, what I said was actually what I've been saying for some time, which is that this is an industry that is integrated between Canada and the United States, in North America, and what is crazy would be for us to impose costs only on our industry in a way that would not reduce emissions, but simply shift jobs and development to other parts of North America. That makes no sense. We've said for some time, it's very public, we're seeking a continental response on this particular question, not just with the United States. We'd like to see Mexico as well in it.

SO WHY DON'T WE PROPOSE SOMETHING THEN?

We have proposed something.

WHAT HAVE WE PROPOSED?

Well the Province of Alberta, excuse me, the Province of Alberta itself already has a, it's one of the few GHD regulatory environments in the country. It has one. I think it's a model on which you could, on which you could go broader.

THIS IS THE CARBON LEVY?

This is the tech fund price carbon levy and the, the, it's not a levy, it's a price and there's a tech fund in which, in which the private sector makes investments. So look, that's what Alberta has done, that's a model that's available but you know as I say, we're very open to see progress on this on a continental basis. I've said that repeatedly to our partners in North America and we look forward to working on that.

WHEN I SAID I LOOKED THROUGH YOUR SPEECHES, I FOUND ONE FROM JUNE OF 2007 THAT YOU GAVE IN BERLIN, THAT I FOUND, QUITE INTERESTING.

Yeah, okay, I vaguely remember the event.

IT WAS YOUR FIRST TRIP TO BERLIN.

Yeah.

THAT YOU SAID IN THE SPEECH.

It was just before the...

BUT IT WAS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE.

Just before the G8 meeting.

JUST BEFORE THE G8 AND IT WAS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE. I WANNA REMIND YOU OF A COUPLE OF YOUR QUOTES BECAUSE I WANNA SEE WHETHER YOU STILL BELIEVE THIS FUNDAMENTALLY THAT YOU, STEPHEN HARPER BELIEVE THIS. "CLIMATE CHANGE IS PERHAPS THE BIGGEST THREAT TO CONFRONT THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY TODAY." DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?

I think it's a significant threat. Geez, where does it rank in terms of our economic challenges, in terms of the Jihadism that we now face globally. It's still a big threat.

BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE BIGGEST THREAT.

I don't know about that. I mean since then we've had the global recession and we've had the rise, you know, the kind of second phase rise of the, of the global terrorist movement so I would put those up there as well.

YOU ALSO SAID, "WE OWE IT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS, WE AS CANADA. WHEN YOU'RE LINKING CLIMATE CHANGE TO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, WE OWE IT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS TO DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO ADDRESS THIS WORLD PROBLEM. WE SHOULD MAKE A SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO CONFRONTING THIS CHALLENGE. TALKING THE TALK DOESN'T WORK

ANYMORE. IT'S TIME TO WALK THE WALK." HAVE WE DONE ANY OF THOSE THINGS?

Yeah. Look, for the first time in history, this country actually has GHD emissions that have been falling.

WILL WE MAKE OUR TARGETS OF 2020?

We've got more work to do but our emissions are falling.

MOST PEOPLE THINK WE CAN'T MAKE THOSE TARGETS.

You know, previous government had, anybody can go around talking about targets. What's the actual results. Ours have been going down. Other countries' emissions for the most part are going up. World emissions are going up. Canada's have not been going up. So look, is there more that can be done? I think so, absolutely. But as I've said all along Peter, the real, I'll tell you, the real challenge on this is how you reduce emissions in a way that do not endanger jobs and growth of people at home and unless everybody works together, the risk that all of us have when we undertake measures of regulation and we've taken them in the transportation sector, the electricity sector, other areas. The risk you have is that all you do is shift the emissions to some other place that isn't having the same regulations, that's the challenge. So that's why we've said, you know, we've said when we came to office, we were very clear about this, we didn't like the previous framework, we thought the targets were ridiculous and only one third of global emissions were regulated and we said, the only way to tackle this is with a, an international protocol that, that takes in all emitters and that is now, frankly, that was the lone voice back in 2006-2007 and that was the mantra of just about every developed country at least.

BUT DOESN'T SOMEBODY HAVE TO TAKE BOLD ACTION? I MEAN THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL (OVERLAPPING)...

No everybody, everybody has to take bold action.

BUT IT'S AS IF EVERYBODY IS SORT OF SITTING ON THE SIDELINES WAITING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE TO TAKE BOLD ACTION SO THEY ALL TAKE IT TOGETHER.

Well, I don't, I don't think that's true.

DOESN'T SOMEBODY HAVE TO START?

No look I don't think that's true. Let's take Canada. We have one of the cleanest emitting electricity sectors in the world. We have taken further steps. We are phasing out in Canada through regulations, we are phasing out the use of traditional dirty coal. It's, it's going to go to zero in the next 15 years or so. It's not high now and it's, it's continuing to phase out. This is

the biggest, single greenhouse emitting, greenhouse gas emitting source in the world, this coal fired electricity. So if others would just follow our lead, we'd have this problem solved.

YOU MENTIONED JIHADISM AS ONE OF THE OTHER ISSUES. SO WE'RE, CANADA IS, IS IN THE WAR ON ISIS.

Yeah.

AND WHEN YOU TALK TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING THE OPERATIONS IN IRAQ, THEY SUGGEST THAT THE TARGET RICH ENVIRONMENT IS NOW TARGET POOR. THAT MOST OF THE TARGETS HAVE BEEN KNOCKED OUT. BUT IF YOU WANT TARGETS, YOU GOTTA GO TO SYRIA NOW. CANADA AS OF THIS MOMENT IS NOT INVOLVED ON THE SYRIAN FRONT.

Right.

IS THAT GONNA CHANGE?

I haven't made a final decision on that. Certainly as I said in the House of Commons, our, our view is that Isil is a real serious threat to the world and by implication to this country and we want to do what we can to fight it and certainly to, A) to stop its growth, which I think is kind of happening and then to roll this terrible menace back and hitting it in Syria is a very real option. As you know, some of our allies have done that but we're very clear on...

WHY WOULDN'T WE?

What we're very, very clear on is we don't want anything that's interpreted as a war on the government of Syria. We've invited by the government of Iraq into Iraq, we're doing that, that's why we're there. Syria is a little trickier and this government has, you know, regardless of what differences, as you know, we have condemned with everyone else the Assad government but we have no desire to enter in a war with any government in that country and so that makes this situation a bit tricky.

BUT YOU'RE STILL PONDERING IT?

These are options. We're continuing to look at options as we go forward but we haven't taken a final decision on that.

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE ON THE SIX MONTH MISSION. WAS THAT PART OF TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER TO (OVERLAP) PUSH BEYOND SIX MONTHS?

(OVERLAP) We'll evalu- In six months we'll, you know, as we approach that date, Peter, we'll evaluate the mission and decide, you know, what is it we don't need to keep doing and what

other things maybe should we do instead. But you know, we're going to be guided obviously by ah what we think is a global responsibility to take ah, to take this movement on. And doing what we think reasonably is our part in the global effort to protect the world and protect our country.

YOU'VE WATCHED AS THERE HAVE BEEN INCIDENTS IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES INCLUDING CANADA BUT AUSTRALIA THE MOST RECENT. DO YOU THINK THAT THE DECISION TO BE INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT AGAINST ISIS, ISIL PUT CANADIANS AT UNDUE RISK AS A RESULT OF THAT?

No. Um look, I think, let's be very clear on this. We're not – we're not at risk from ISIL because we're fighting them. We're fighting them because we are at risk from them. This is an organization along with the entire global jihadist movement they represent that has repeatedly made threats on this country. Toronto 18, we've had the Via Rail, we've had numerous terror plots dealt with both very publicly and not so very publicly in this country. So these are real threats to the country. I think, I think Canadians understand that which is why they're so supportive of us taking these guys on. But look, that will – that's their next line. We're only attacking you because you're – because you're standing up to us. You know, all those poor, innocent ah ethnic and religious minorities who are getting slaughtered, they weren't doing anything to ISIL. They were just there. These are people who kill everybody in their way who is not like them, for that sole reason. It's, it's a strange – it's a strange – it's hard for us who live in a tolerant and modern pluralistic society to understand this. But this is the kind of threat we face.

THE INCIDENTS THAT I MENTIONED, AT THE MOMENT THEY WERE HAPPENING IT WOULD BE HARD TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT WAS HAPPENING, WHO WAS BEHIND THESE, HOW INVOLVED ISIS OR ISIL MIGHT BE.

(overlap) Right.

UM WHEN WE'VE LOOKED AT THEM, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CANADIAN AND THE OTHER INCIDENTS IS AS A LEADER, YOU WERE RIGHT THERE.

Yeah.

YOU WERE THERE WHEN IT HAPPENED.

Yeah. One of them anyway.

ONE OF THEM. BUT WE'VE NEVER HEARD YOUR STORY. WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN THAT ROOM? THERE IS A GUNMAN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR AND THERE WAS A LOT OF SHOOTING GOING ON.

You know, Peter, as you know, I don't spend a lot of time talking about myself. At a time like that, my first responsibility and as you know, I've told you we've received some training to deal with these kinds of situations.

My first responsibility is to extricate myself from such a situation so I can continue the normal functions of government and obviously extraordinary functions on a day like that.

I don't need to tell you that for everybody in Parliament that day, not just our caucus, the other caucuses, the staff and employees, it was an experience no one wants to repeat.

And obviously all our various police and security agencies on the Hill, off the Hill are going over the details of that to reach some conclusions on how they can ah better prevent and better respond to such incidents (overlap) in the future.

(OVERLAP) SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE IN THAT ROOM AND IN THE OTHER CAUCUS ROOM THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE AFRAID FOR THEIR LIVES AT THAT MOMENT WHEN THEY HEARD WHAT WAS GOING ON OUTSIDE THAT DOOR.

Yeah, that's a fact. That's beyond a doubt.

SO –

Absolutely beyond a doubt.

WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH YOUR MIND? I MEAN WHAT WERE YOU HEARING?

Um look as everybody knows, we were, you know, I told people we were – we were in a caucus room. You see, you see on the video you see security people having a fire fight chasing a gunman down the hall. You're in the caucus room there, all you hear is a whole lot of shooting coming towards you. And you don't know whether that's a fire fight or whether that's just a bunch of guys with automatic weapons wiping everybody out in their path.

So you don't know what that is but obviously ah I think it's fair to say that ah for everybody in the room, we were pretty concerned.

WERE YOU SCARED?

You know, I, I think I mentioned to you, I've been trained in incidences like that. Obviously you get keyed up. But um –

WHAT DOES IT MEAN YOU WERE TRAINED, LIKE –

Well the RCMP has run me through some drills to simulate these kinds of situations. So ah you know, as a prime minister you're in a little bit different position of other people, Peter.

As prime minister I have access obviously to all the government's intelligence, all the security risks that are faced by the country and by me personally. So, you're in a different head space than most other people who are suddenly facing this kind of situation for the first time.

As I say it's a – it's a situation nobody wants to repeat. But the bigger question and obviously the questions we're looking at as we formulate additional legislation to deal with this terrorist threat is what do we have to do to protect the country writ large. That's really our main concern.

JUST THE LAST POINT. WERE YOU, AS HAS BEEN REPORTED, PUT IN A CLOSET?

Ah you know, I'm not going to comment on that. Um ah one of the ah – one of the things you try and do in a situation like that is conceal yourself if you can. But obviously the best situation is to exit, as I said, so that you can – so the prime minister can continue to run the government and that's what we were able to do within a few minutes fortunately.

WHO WAS THE FIRST PERSON YOU CALLED WHEN YOU GOT OUT OF THERE?

I called my mom just to assure her I was okay and ah, and ah I could tell by her voice that she was concerned.

SHE'D PROBABLY BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS.

Yeah she was watching.

A COUPLE OF OTHER ISSUES, IF WE CAN SORT OF GO THROUGH QUICKLY. VETERANS AFFAIRS. NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT WHAT YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS DONE TO LOOK AFTER VETERANS, THE PERCEPTION - AND YOU KNOW THIS AS WELL AS ANYONE, THAT PERCEPTION CAN OFTEN BECOME THE REALITY - THE PERCEPTION IS THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT ISN'T LOOKING AFTER VETERANS WHO COME BACK FROM OVERSEAS POSTINGS, OVERSEAS CONFLICTS. AND WE NOW HAVE A COUNTRY WHERE THERE ARE THOUSANDS, IF NOT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF VETERANS IN THOSE POSITIONS. CAN THAT PERCEPTION CHANGE AS LONG AS THE MINISTER DOESN'T CHANGE?

Well look, I don't - I don't actually think that represents the perception of the vast majority of Canadian veterans. I know that to not be the case. Fact of the matter is this country has the best veterans programs and services in the world. There are services that we have increased significantly.

We have some important changes going on in that area, Peter. Um, ah obviously we're dealing with a big change in the veterans' population. The traditional World War 2, Korean War veterans are unfortunately diminishing in numbers and ah there's a new wave of veterans really from Afghanistan and other conflicts we're entering.

So it's a - you're really finding that a whole bunch of traditional services, benefits that we deliver, there's a shrinking demand for them very rapidly and increasing demand for other kinds of services.

At the same time the previous government brought in what was called a new Veterans Charter, just at the end of their government. Now in fairness to them, this was widely proclaimed, supported by everybody, widely heralded by veterans groups at the time. But ah as time has gone on, it's become apparent that ah there are some gaps in that programming so we're dealing with those things.

And we will continue to deal with them and I am confident that we'll continue to have - look, I'm confident of two things. We'll continue to have some people who will not be happy because it's a diverse population, people are entitled to their views. There's literally hundreds of thousands of clients of Veterans Affairs Canada.

But at the same time we will respond and make the changes we need to make where we see real gaps in the services.

DO YOU REMAIN CONFIDENT IN MR. FANTINO (OVERLAP) AS THE MINISTER?

(OVERLAP) Well you know – You know, Peter, ah you know the – you know what the answer to that question is. You don't have to ask it.

SO THERE'S NO CABINET SHUFFLE LOOMING IN THE EARLY NEW YEAR?

By definition the prime minister has confidence in all of his ministers.

AN INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED ABORIGINAL, INDIGENOUS WOMEN. YOU'VE REJECTED THAT IN THE PAST.

Yeah.

THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME INDICATION THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT MAY BE AT LEAST CONSIDERING SOME FORM OF FORMAL INQUEST OR INQUIRY OR INVESTIGATION.

Um it, it isn't really high on our radar, to be honest, Peter. You know, our ministers will continue to dialogue ah with ah those who are concerned about this. They're studying it. But we have an awful lot of studies and information on the phenomenon and an awful good ah indication of what the record is in terms of investigation and prevention of these sorts of things.

I really think the important thing – you know, we can spend literally as we have in the past on some of these royal commissions or inquiries, we can spend hundreds of millions of dollars to get the same report for the 41st or 42nd time, or we can actually take action. And that's what we're trying to do.

We've, as you know, taken strong laws to prevent and to punish ah criminal activity which a lot of this is. We've taken, ah made significant investments into ah preventative measures, particularly involving family violence measures on reserves and elsewhere.

We've done things to try and enhance the legal and social status of women in aboriginal communities and reserves. You know, things like, basic things like having protections under the Human Rights Act, matrimonial property rights, these kinds of things that were not done in the past.

So there's still more work to be done but I would – I would rather spend my time focusing on what actions we can take to improve ah these situations, prevent these situations than, than have more multimillion dollar inquiries.

MIKE DUFFY GOES ON TRIAL IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS. IF YOU'RE CALLED AS A WITNESS WOULD YOU APPEAR?

There's no reason to believe, Peter, that that will happen. I'm not – I have no knowledge of Mr. Duffy's activities. I'm not party to matters he's been charged with.

SO WHEN YOU SAYS THERE'S NO REASON, THERE'S NO REASON TO BELIEVE YOU'LL BE CALLED AS A WITNESS OR THERE'S NO REASON –

There's no reason –

(OVERLAP) – THAT YOU WOULD APPEAR IF YOU WERE CALLED?

I, I'm told that a lawyer looked at this for me. He said there's absolutely no reasonable reason you would be called as a witness because I'm not a witness.

LAST QUESTION.

Yeah.

WHEN YOU LOOK BACK AT THE NINE YEARS ALMOST THAT YOU'VE BEEN IN POWER AND CONTEMPLATE ASKING CANADIANS FOR ANOTHER MANDATE THAT WOULD MEAN ENTERING A SECOND DECADE OF A HARPER GOVERNMENT, YOU ONCE SAID BEFORE YOU WERE ELECTED: GIVE ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO GOVERN AND I'LL CHANGE CANADA.

Mhm.

HOW HAS CANADA CHANGED UNDER NINE YEARS OF A STEPHEN HARPER GOVERNMENT?

Well look, let me – let me maybe mention three reasons that I think are pretty central to what our government has ah, has done. First of all, you know back a decade ago and longer, when times were relatively good, Canada was at best middle of the pack. I think that's flattering us on a lot of indicators.

We've come through and out of, you know, one of the most difficult periods in modern economic history and we're leading the developed world in many areas. And I believe ah that job isn't done. You know, we've got – we just talked about it earlier – new challenges that are on the horizon.

But you know, you look around the world, there are countries like us very few, have got balanced budgets, are seeing job growth, economic growth. We're able to cut taxes for people for every Canadian family. We're able to put investments into important things like we've done recently for continued growth, federal infrastructure and into innovation and research.

You look around the world you see most other countries cutting services, raising taxes, job growth is flat if not falling. Um so look, I think this is a – this is a – this is a big change for where this country sits in the world and I'd like to see that continue.

I think if you ask any objective analyst right now in the world, what's the politically and economically most stable country in the entire world right now, they would say Canada. There's no reason for us to change that. What we want to do is entrench that.

The criminal justice area, we've talked about that. We have crime rates falling. We've put emphasis on a different kind of criminal justice that protects victims and protects law abiding citizens and properly punishes criminals. That's something the Canadian public has supported.

I think the – I think the ah the proof points of that, not just in terms of popularity but in terms of results are clear. Obviously we've got more work to do on the area of terrorism but as you know, this is not a unique challenge to this country.

And finally um you know, we've taken a different approach. Actually I think a more traditional Canadian approach to foreign affairs which is that we take stands, clear stands based on our values and interests. We obviously work with allies because most things we can't do on our own.

But Canada's voice is heard and understood. And I think if you look at some of the big questions that have been confronting us recently, whether it's jihadism or Russia or some of the events in the Middle East, I think the truth is that we've been well ahead of the curve.

WE USED TO BE KNOWN AS A LIBERAL COUNTRY IN TERMS OF THOUGHT.

Yeah.

ARE WE A CONSERVATIVE COUNTRY NOW?

Well look, that's – we're a democratic country, Peter, which means we have liberals and conservatives. We have people on the right and people on the left and people of different shades, different opinions.

BUT WASN'T THAT YOUR HOPE WHEN YOU TALKED ABOUT CHANGE (overlap) IN THE COUNTRY?

Well look, I ah, I think the country – I think the country - I think we've obviously moved the legislative policy agenda of the country and I think the country has largely moved with us.

You know, the other guys are largely afraid to attack us on the fundamentals of our policies because in fact the country has moved with us on most of these things. So I think we've gone in that direction.

But as I say, it's a democratic country. So you don't want to say – I don't want to get into the, what I used to criticize about the Liberals claiming – basically claiming if you weren't a Liberal you somehow weren't really Canadian. I don't want to say if you're not a Conservative you're not really Canadian. I don't think that would be fair. Um but look, I think we're a country that's pursuing good conservative economic, security and foreign policies. At the same time, I think we remain ah one of the most tolerant, open, diverse countries in the world. There's all kinds of things that I think people of many political shades can feel very proud of about this country which is one of the reasons why during the past decade we have seen such a precipitous fall in the unity threats that used to exist in this country, particularly in Quebec.

ON THAT NOTE, PRIME MINISTER, WE WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY THE BEST FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

I want to wish you the same Peter, to all your team here as well at CBC and of course all of your viewers, a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you. (END)