

The First Foreign Trip, February 19, 2009

PRIME MINISTER HARPER: We are deeply honored President Obama has chosen Canada for his first foreign visit since taking office.

His election to the presidency launches a new chapter in the rich history of Canada-U.S. relations. It is a relationship between allies, partners, neighbors, and the closest of friends; a relationship built on our shared values -- freedom, democracy and equality of opportunity epitomized by the President himself.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, it is a great pleasure to be here in Ottawa.

Prime Minister Harper and I just completed a productive and wide-ranging discussion on the many issues of common concern to the people of the United States and Canada. I came to Canada on my first trip as President to underscore the closeness and importance of the relationship between our two nations, and to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to work with friends and partners to meet the common challenges of our time.

As neighbors, we are so closely linked that sometimes we may have a tendency to take our relationship for granted, but the very success of our friendship throughout history demands that we renew and deepen our cooperation here in the 21st century.

PRIME MINISTER HARPER: This has been a very constructive visit, revealing to both of us a strong consensus on important bilateral and international issues. President Obama, I look forward to working with you in the months ahead to make progress on these issues and build on the long and deep friendship between our two countries and our two peoples.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I'm extraordinarily grateful to Prime Minister Harper for his hospitality, his graciousness, and his leadership. And, I'm looking forward to this being the start of a continued extraordinary relationship between our two countries. And I'm very much looking forward to working with -- with this government - and all Canadians in order to promote these values.

And I'm looking forward to coming back to Canada as soon as it warms up.

[LAUGHTER]