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KANDAHAR, January 11, 2009 — Today, the Honourable Beverley J. Oda, Minister of International Cooperation, launched the next phase of Canada's Dahla Dam Signature Project in Afghanistan. She met in Kandahar's Arghandab Valley with the Governor of Kandahar, Tooryalai Wesa, and representatives of SNC-Lavalin, the firm selected to lead repair efforts to Dahla Dam.

"I am pleased that the rehabilitation of the Dahla Dam is now underway because this is one of Canada's most significant contributions to the Afghan people, " said Minister Oda, who is also Vice-Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan.

"This project is an important step in the economic development of the region and will result in thousands of seasonal jobs. Once the repairs are completed by 2011, the Dahla Dam will provide a stable water supply to Kandaharis, and its irrigation systems will increase the agricultural productivity to benefit all Kandaharis."

Built in the 1950's, the Dahla Dam has suffered extensive deterioration due to many years of disrepair. The resulting decrease in the capacity to regulate water flow from the dam to surrounding districts has negatively affected the irrigation of farmland and crop production. Eighty percent of Kandahar's population lives along the river basin. Ensuring the proper control of water flow in an arid province like Kandahar is critical to ensuring a sustainable agricultural economy.

Preparatory road and bridgework to get to the dam site is being done that will permit entry to the dam by heavy equipment. This work is advancing well and is nearing completion. Work by SNC-Lavalin is set to begin this winter in full partnership with the Afghan Ministries of Energy and Water; Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; and Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

SNC-Lavalin will be responsible for managing, coordinating and providing oversight on overall project delivery, including:

- Repairs to the Dahla Dam, including replacing and repairing key components to improve water flow;
 - Fixing gates to control the flow of water from the Arghandab River into the canal system;
 - Repairs to the canals;
- Support for agricultural development including helping improve local water resource management and training on new crop production techniques.

The Dahla Dam initiative was requested by the Government of Afghanistan and it is one of Canada's signature projects. It supports one of Canada's six priorities – the delivery of basic services in Kandahar province.

This contract award is the result of a request for proposals issued by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to identify a Canadian-based firm to coordinate and manage repairs to the existing dam and irrigation system, as well as key activities to support development of the agriculture sector in Kandahar province.

Canada is investing up to \$50 million over the next three years to support the Afghan government's Dahla Dam initiative. The project will generate up to 10,000 seasonal jobs. Funding for this signature project is included in the Government of Canada's investments over the next three years to help the Afghan government deliver basic services.

SNC-Lavalin is one of the leading engineering and construction groups in the world and a major player in the provision of economic infrastructure. SNC-Lavalin has offices across Canada and in over 35 other countries around the world and is currently working in some 100 countries.

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For more information, or to view a podcast on the Dahla Dam Signature project, visit www.afghanistan.gc.ca.

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