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**PREMIER TO OPEN NASCO, ATTEND LEADERS' SUMMIT WITH PRESIDENT OF MEXICO**

Premier Gary Doer is joining Mexican President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa and Guanajuato Gov. Juan Manuel Oliva Ramirez this week to open the annual meeting of the North America's SuperCorridor Coalition (NASCO), which will also include Quebec Premier Jean Charest, Mexican governors and business leaders from Canada and Mexico.

Doer will be joined by prominent local business leaders including Charles Loewen, chair of the Business Council of Manitoba and chair and CEO of Loewen Windows; Jim Carr, president and CEO of the business council; Arthur DeFehr, president and CEO of Palliser Furniture and co-chair of the Manitoba International Gateway Council; and Art Mauro, chair of the Winnipeg Airport Authority and co-chair of the Manitoba International Gateway Council.

The NASCO meeting is being held tomorrow to Friday in Guanajuato, Mexico, in conjunction with the 2008 Leaders' Summit on North American Relations. Calderón, Doer, Oliva Ramirez and NASCO president George Blackwood Jr. will bring opening remarks to the conference. NASCO promotes trade and transportation along the mid-continent corridor that features Manitoba as the northern leg of the route. Guanajuato is located in mid-Mexico, similar to Manitoba's location within Canada.

"Strengthening the mid-continent corridor to the north and south of us will further support our east-west routes and help us continue to grow as a North American trade and transportation hub that features one of the most successful inland ports on the prairies," Doer said.

Each day, Canada, the U.S. and Mexico conduct over \$2.5 billion in trilateral trade which adds up to over \$903 billion annually, the premier noted. Manitoba's exports to Mexico were over \$172 million in 2007, up 12 per cent from 2006, while the province's exports to the U.S. totalled \$8.3 billion in 2007, up seven per cent from 2006.

While in Guanajuato, Doer and the Manitoba business delegation will also promote the province's inland port in Winnipeg and its potential for further growth.

“Located in the heart of the continent, Winnipeg has a well-established network of air, rail and trucking routes, which also includes vital marine links via the Port of Churchill, the only deep-sea port in mid-Canada. We want to continue to build our inland port by promoting it at every available opportunity,” Doer said.

Manitoba’s inland port is one of western Canada’s busiest Doer added, noting:

- Winnipeg’s James Armstrong Richardson International Airport is the largest air cargo handler on the prairies and first in Canada in the number of dedicated cargo freighters operating through it.
- Winnipeg’s airport is the only one on the prairies - and one of only a few in North America - that operates unrestricted 24 hours a day, with a new terminal currently under construction.
- The border crossing south of Winnipeg at Emerson is the top-ranked border crossing in western Canada, processing \$14.4 billion in trade traffic annually.
- Winnipeg is home to the headquarters of several of Canada’s largest employers in the trucking industry and is a nexus for truck and rail transportation to the United States and Mexico.
- Winnipeg is the only location between British Columbia and central Ontario where the key lines of Canada’s two major railways, CN and CPR, intersect. Both railways maintain extensive intermodal yards in Winnipeg. CN, CPR and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad provide direct access to southern markets.

The 2008 leaders’ summit is the fourth annual and it will focus on strengthening North American competitiveness, trade and innovation, investment opportunities for economic development, energy and the environment. Doer hosted the 2006 summit in Gimli and next year’s event will be hosted by Charest in Quebec.

“Despite the successes that Canada, the United States and Mexico have enjoyed under the North American Free Trade Agreement, North America now faces more intense global competition than ever before. Provinces, states and the private sector have an important role to play in supporting and reinforcing our global competitive advantages,” Doer said. “We must continue to innovate in order to grow our economies, build stronger workforces, protect our environment and improve the lives of our citizens.”