

## Québec@Monde International Relations Newsletter

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### Québec Premier Discusses Trade and Culture in Mexico at NASCO Conference 2008

Premier Jean Charest participated in the Leaders' Summit and the 2008 NASCO Conference (North American SuperCorridor's Coalition), which took place in Guanajuato, Mexico, from June 4 to 6. Accompanied by the Québec Delegate general in Mexico, Doris Girard, and several heads of Québec companies, Mr. Charest reiterated the importance of maintaining the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

NASCO is a coalition comprised of federated states, cities, and businesses dedicated to promoting a trade corridor through the centre of the North American continent. The NASCO Conference is held in conjunction with the Leaders' Summit, which is composed of U.S. and Mexican Governors and Canadian Premiers, and whose goal is to stimulate broad discussion on issues of common interest such as economic development, energy, and competitiveness. While in Guanajuato, Premier Charest stressed the need to strengthen the Leaders' Summit and said he was hoping to see a strong turnout in Québec City next year. Québec City will be hosting the Leaders' Summit and the NASCO Conference in 2009.

The Premier took the opportunity afforded by the Summit to have discussions with the Governor of the State of Guanajuato and host of the event, Juan Manuel Oliva Ramírez, the Governor of the State of Nuevo León, José Natividad González Parás, and the Governor of the State of Zacatecas, Amalia García Medina. Mr. Charest also met with the former Prime Minister of Spain, José María Aznar, who was a special guest speaker at the Summit.

The meeting with the Governor of Nuevo León, the sixth since the Hemispheria Summit in May, 2005, focused on enhancing the already productive dialogue that exists between the Québec and Nuevo León governments. During their discussions, the two leaders agreed that the exhibition of large-scale photos entitled "Impressions of Québec," which was on display in Mexico City from April 28 to June 1, 2008, would be shown at the Santa Lucia Festival in Monterrey, slated to begin in September, 2008. During Premier Charest's meeting with the Governor of Guanajuato, Juan Maria Oliva Ramírez, it was hinted that the exhibition might also make a stop in Guanajuato in tandem with the *Cine en Corto* film festival. The Governor of Guanajuato will be making an official visit to Québec City in July to attend the meeting of the UNESCO Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC). The city of San Miguel de Allende will be proclaimed a cultural heritage of humanity site at that time.

The Governor of the State of Zacatecas showed an interest in Québec know-how in such areas as mining, waste management, information technologies, multimedia, and cultural tourism. The Premier invited Governor García Medina to carry out a mission to Québec.

Over the course of his discussions with the Governors, Jean Charest stressed the importance of ensuring heavy participation on the part of political leaders from the three NAFTA countries at the next Summit.

This was the Premier's third mission to Mexico.