

## **BILATERAL AGREEMENTS STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CANADA AND MEXICO**

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International Trade Minister Sergio Marchi today signed six bilateral agreements on behalf of the Government of Canada. The signing ceremony took place following a meeting in Mexico City with Governor General Roméo LeBlanc, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and Canada's First Ministers. Mexico is the first stop in the five-city Team Canada trade mission.

"These agreements highlight the expanding and mature relationship that Canada and Mexico have developed since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] in 1994," said Minister Marchi. "Today's announcements clearly show that our two countries are strongly committed to expanding the bilateral relationship in an increasing number of important areas."

In the *Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in Combatting Narcotics Trafficking and Preventing Drug Abuse*, the governments of Canada and Mexico will exchange information in a variety of areas, including the suspected illegal traffic of narcotics, legislative experiences and practices, and will address the issue of drug dependency. This MOU follows a similar undertaking that was in place from 1990 to 1995, and demonstrates the continued commitment of both governments to work together in this area.

A *Memorandum of Understanding on Development Co-operation between the Canadian International Development Agency and Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México* will support and facilitate mutual development co-operation. This may include institutional co-operation in areas that foster long-term linkages and relationships between Canada and Mexico and the development of joint co-operative activities in other countries.

Canada and Mexico have benefited from a unique relationship of co-operation in the field of telecommunications since the original signing of the *Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Telecommunications* between Industry Canada and Mexico's Secretariat of Telecommunications and Transportation in 1992. In the intervening years, the two countries have experienced rapid growth in their industries by sharing innovative technologies and by collaborating in the development of telecommunications policy and regulations. The MOU reiterates a commitment to continue co-operation in this dynamic and increasingly important area.

The *Memorandum of Understanding on Health* is the first formal agreement between Health Canada and Mexico's Ministry of Health. This MOU formalizes the increasing and excellent co-operation between the two ministries over the past five years. It covers a wide range of areas, including health technology,

public health and health promotion. It is meant to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise between the two ministries and other health organizations in Canada and Mexico.

The *Memorandum of Understanding on Education Co-operation* aims to expand bilateral co-operation in education, encourage the needed skills for the new knowledge-based society of the 21st century, and foster greater learning and understanding between Canada and Mexico. It encourages increased linkages between academic institutions in both countries, and the identification of opportunities and the exchange of information in the areas of faculty and student exchanges, specialized training programs, and research and development.

The *Model Forest Co-operation Program*, between Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Mexico's Secretariat of Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries, will support and strengthen the Model Forest Program in Mexico, including the addition of the Monarch forest, which is integral to the survival of the Monarch butterfly. This will advance the sustainable development of Mexican forests, including better forest management practices, increase and diversify the economic benefits derived from forests, encourage strong social participation in forest management, and promote greater environmental awareness among the local population.

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