

Preferred Mexican Location

Minister Roldán, Deputy Minister Gutiérrez, Director Soria, Senior Aguilar, and other representatives of the Mexican government.

My name is Leo Groarke. I am the President of Trent University, which is located in Peterborough and in Toronto.

It is an honour and a privilege to be able to make some remarks on behalf of the Canadian delegation that is here today. I want to begin by thanking the Minister and the Mexican government for arranging for such sunny days while we are here in Mexico. It may seem cold to Mexicans, but it has given us a wonderful break from the snow and cold in Canada these days! More deeply I want to thank the government and the Minister of Public Education for their commitment to education and to educational reform. I want to say that we share the view that education can be a profoundly transformative force that can positively influence the development of our local communities, our provinces, our nations and the whole world.

Mr. Minister I would like to commend you for your comments only a few days ago, on a visit to the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, where you remarked that “the XXI century presents us with new educational challenges, new challenges and new demands that make it indispensable, inevitable and urgent that we commit ourselves to the struggle and the battle for educational quality.”

We agree that this requires a constant evaluation of, and reflection on, teaching and learning that accompanies “a permanent search for what quality implies in the educational processes of the 21st century.” The Canadian institutions here today hope that we can collaborate and partner with you as you continue on this quest.

We are a group of seven Canadian institutions – for cultural reasons that Canadians will understand, we will call ourselves “the Group of Seven.” It is made up of two universities and five colleges that are keenly interested in working with you. I would like to quickly introduce the members of the group to you. They are:

St. Lawrence College, Lakehead University, Georgian College, Lambton College, Confederation College, College of New Caledonia, Northwest Community College, and my own university, Trent University.

From our point of view, I can tell you that the mobility program we are celebrating has been a wonderful opportunity to enhance what we do as institutions in a way that has allowed us to deepen and expand our relationships with Mexico in many ways.

I want to emphasize that the connections between Canada and Mexico are inherently strong. We share a continent, and are two nations of great natural and cultural wealth that extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific – as we like to say in Canada “from sea to shining sea.”

At this moment in our mutual development we share a dominant neighbour. With deep respect for our American colleagues here today, I want to say that this is a time when Canadians believe that we can best manage our relations with that neighbour by working together. In view of this, there is a dramatic rise in interest over the question how Canada and Mexico can work together to promote the education of our students. One consequence of this is a dramatic rise in the number of Mexican students travelling to Canada in 2017, a 40% increase over the previous year.

The current mobility program has already allowed us to enhance what we do in many ways:

- By diversifying our classes in a way that includes more international perspectives
- By enriching the experience of Mexican students and our own Canadian students and faculty
- By encouraging us to expand our relations with Mexican universities and colleges
- By preparing the way for future collaborations across disciplines in a way that includes language study as well as undergraduate and graduate programs in all areas

I can tell you that my own community, Peterborough, has embraced our Mexican students and that our faculty and staff have been tremendously impressed by those students selected to participate in the current mobility program.

I want to finish by thanking Mexico and the Mexican government for the opportunity to be part of the current project. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Superior Education, the Ministry of Public Education, and Mexican universities to continue to provide outstanding opportunities to students in both Mexico and Canada, in a way that reflects the growing friendship that we share.