

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, MONIQUE GAGNON-TREMBLAY, AS PART OF THE ANNUAL DISTINGUISHED QUÉBEC ADDRESS TO THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (SUNY) AT PLATTSBURGH

“QUÉBEC'S NEW INTERNATIONAL POLICY: ENHANCING TIES WITH THE UNITED STATES”

Plattsburgh, NY, February 5, 2007

Spoken version has precedence

Ms. Consul General of the U.S.,
Mr. Delegate General of Québec,
President Ettling,
Dr. Kirkey,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

C'est un plaisir pour moi de me retrouver dans votre région aujourd'hui, au coeur du corridor Québec-New York, plus particulièrement à l'université SUNY-Plattsburgh, un des berceau des études québécoises aux États-Unis.

I am delighted and honoured to be invited to give the Annual Distinguished Québec Address as part of the program of Québec-themed activities being held on the campus of your university this week.

I especially appreciate meeting the representatives of your institution, which has played a prominent role in developing the field of Québec studies in the U.S. for nearly 30 years, thanks in part to its proximity to Québec and to the strong leadership demonstrated by a number of faculty members. With the assistance of

the Government of Québec, the State University of New York at Plattsburgh has offered various nationally ranked programs that have attracted the participation of nearly all American researchers in the field. I am thinking in particular of the Québec Summer Seminar, launched in 1979, which has enabled more than 500 professors from all regions of the United States to gain first-hand experience of life in Québec. And I cannot overstate the pioneering role played by two of Plattsburgh's most dedicated scholars, the late Jeanne Kissner and Richard Beach in establishing Québec studies programs in Plattsburgh and around the country.

In keeping with this fine tradition, the Institute for Québec Studies was created in 2004. As a result of this major project, SUNY Plattsburgh is the only U.S. university with an institute devoted entirely to Québec studies. Moreover, SUNY Plattsburgh promotes the Institute among the 63 other SUNY campuses and other U.S. universities, thereby raising awareness of Québec society. In this regard, I would like to pay special tribute to the commitment and enthusiasm of President Ettlting and the Institute's staff, particularly Dr. Kirkey and Richard.

Above all, I must stress the importance of their ongoing efforts. As we prepare to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Québec City by Samuel de Champlain and of the exploration of the lake that bears his name, I cannot overemphasize the importance of enhancing our understanding of each other.

President John F. Kennedy once said of Canada and the United States that :
« Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies »

All of this is true, still today. Even if we are of different nationalities, we have much in common, we share core values, which make up our North American identity, such as democracy, freedom of speech, civil liberties, free enterprise

and cultural pluralism. However, we tend to forget that we also share part of our destiny.

In this respect, a variety of environmental, trade, energy and security challenges will require substantial crossborder cooperation in the future. And as we all know, relations between individual states and provinces are often highly productive, thereby enabling us to achieve consensus around key issues and to propose concrete solutions. We must focus our efforts on building on these dynamic regional relationships across North America. The Quebec / New York trade corridor in which the Plattsburgh North Country Chamber of Commerce plays a major role is a good example of a successful bi-national partnership.

In May 2006, I unveiled Québec's first new International Policy in 15 years. This policy reaffirms the paramount importance we attach to our unique relationship with our American neighbours, most notably New York State and New England.

You may be thinking: why would Québec need an International Policy?

The answer is simple: Now a third of jobs in Québec rely on our international activities. Quebec's GDP is now 60% export-dependent. 81 % of those international exports flow to the United States. In fact, we export almost twice as much to the U.S. than we do to the rest of Canada.

Our economic growth is contingent on attracting and integrating qualified immigrants, while our artists frequently look beyond our borders not only for inspiration, but for a significant portion of the income that allows them to keep on producing and creating. The future of our language, which has gained a fragile foothold in North America, depends on our relations with French-speaking nations. Moreover, a wide range of governments around the world are working in concert to resolve complex issues in key areas such as energy and the environment.

Furthermore Québec intends to take part in the deliberations and meetings of forums and organizations whose work has a bearing on its responsibilities and interests, such as Health, Education or Culture.

That is why Québec has played an active international role for over one hundred years and why it continues to do so today. Our very first permanent representation in the United States was established in 1940, here in New York State, and more specifically, at the Rockefeller Plaza in the heart of Manhattan. Its mission was and still is to promote Québec interests, as well as provide Americans with the opportunity to build long lasting relationships with their Québec counterparts in all sectors.

It was thus in keeping with the principles of coordination, consistency and synergy that I introduced our new International Policy last May. We are currently working towards five main goals, which I will now outline for you.

The first of these goals is **to expand Québec's scope of action and sphere of influence**. This in itself marks a turning point: although bilateral relations have been our focus for many years, our future efforts will mainly address key issues taken up in international forums. We thus intend to forge alliances, enter into partnerships and speak out whenever our interests so require.

A groundbreaking agreement with the Government of Canada recently recognized Québec's international role within the context of UNESCO: we now have a permanent Québec representative as part of the Canadian mission to this UN Organisation. This represents an important milestone in our efforts to define a stable and predictable framework for Québec's participation in international organizations.

In keeping with our goal of expanding Québec's scope of action, our initial efforts will focus on restructuring Québec's network of representatives in the U.S. and around the world.

Although Québec Government Office in New York will continue to be the main actor representing our political, economic and cultural interests in the U.S., Québec also plans to expand its presence in a number of other key U.S. states. This decision not only reflects the importance we assign to relations with the U.S., but also ensures that Québec will continue to take an active part in various regional forums such as the Great Lakes Commission and the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers.

Additional resources will be allocated to our Washington, D.C. office with a view to expanding business development opportunities in neighbouring states and strengthening relations with international financial institutions such as the World Bank. Our Washington office will also be tasked with monitoring initiatives undertaken by the Organization of American States. We also plan to expand our delegations in Atlanta and Los Angeles.

The second goal of Québec's International Policy is **to foster growth and prosperity**. The U.S. is our most important economic partner by far. Thanks to Free Trade and to the benefit of our respective economies, north-south commercial traffic has grown. Our internationally exported goods purchased in the United States represent 63.7 billion CDN dollars in 2005. This is not a one-way street. Far from it. With a population of 7.5 million, Québec also represents a lucrative market for American goods. In fact, Québec is the ninth-largest market for U.S. exports in the world.

The action plan accompanying the International Policy includes a number of measures aimed at consolidating and increasing our trade with United States. To this end:

- We will work to build trade corridors, most notably by supporting major regional economic initiatives such as the Québec-New York Summit.
- We will boost the number of companies actively exporting to New England, New York State and the Mid-Atlantic region, in addition to supporting exporters with experience in southern U.S. markets.
- We will promote Québec's hydroelectric resources – a major source of clean, renewable and climate-friendly energy – among the northeastern states.
- We will implement a strategic marketing program aimed at reinforcing the positioning of Québec's agricultural products in key U.S. markets.
- We will renew and develop the primary road infrastructure providing links with the U.S. border states and will work together with states in the Northeast and Midwest to increase transportation interconnectivity. The Québec Department of Transportation plans to invest close to \$100 million over the next three years to upgrade road infrastructure and highways connecting with ports of entry in New York State, Vermont and Maine.

Further afield, Québec takes part in a number of different scientific and cultural exchanges with Europe; intrafirm trade is also significant. We are reinforcing our presence in Germany and Italy to better serve the Eastern European and Mediterranean regions and to strengthen our links with European Union institutions. We will be opening an office in India and boosting our existing representation in China – two countries in which we recently organized large-scale trade missions. We plan to open an office in Brazil and intend to fully maximize the benefits of our presence in Mexico, a fellow partner in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

With knowledge at the centre of a number of key issues, training will be essential to our prosperity. We thus support the inclusion of Québec colleges, universities, students and researchers in major international exchange networks. We are

seeking more foreign students. To this end, I am happy to see that SUNY-Plattsburgh has begun to work closely with universities in Québec. During the Third Québec-New York Economic Summit, President Ettlting and the Rector of Laval University, Dr. Michel Pigeon, signed an agreement between the two institutions to encourage exchange between faculty and students. More recently, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Robert Golden, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Dr. Colin Read, Dean of the School of Administration, another agreement was signed on June 1st, 2006, to encourage exchanges between business-school students. To do successful business in New York and Québec means that our students must be prepared to understand each others' cultures and markets, and these agreements do just that: they prepare young men and women to meet the challenges of our future.

Our third goal is to **enhance security across Québec and North America**. As part of its ongoing responsibilities, the Government of Québec enforces criminal law, administers justice, supervises most police forces, oversees emergency preparedness and provides health and environmental services. Working closely with federal, provincial and state authorities, Québec is thus striving to make North America more secure by combating threats of terrorism, pandemics and trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings.

Québec views security as a prerequisite to trade, not as an obstacle, and recognizes the need to manage the border in keeping with the twin imperatives of efficiency and security. It thus supports the Canada-US Smart Border Declaration, which establishes pre-clearance programs for low-risk goods. We will be taking steps to ensure that Québec companies' participation rate in these programs reaches 80%.

The governments of Canada, of the United States and of Mexico launched the *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP)* in March 2005. A number of the areas targeted by this initiative are of concern for the

Government of Québec, which supports its objective of promoting shared security and prosperity. Accordingly, as a partner in the global initiative, it is our wish to be involved in the process of preparing the measures of the *SPP*.

We also intend to strengthen the links between administrative and police organizations in Québec and New York State; boost Québec's participation in the Northeast Regional Homeland Security Consortium; increase the number of joint simulation exercises; and initiate scientific cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control. Following a recent meeting in Québec City between Québec's attorney general and his counterparts from the Northeast, our security efforts now encompass the legal field as well.

In the economy of the twenty-first century, energy security is of vital strategic importance. Present and future prosperity depends on securing access to abundant and diverse energy supplies. Québec has been and will remain a key American ally in the energy field. As the world's 4th largest producer of hydroelectricity, Québec supplies United States with a source of clean, affordable, safe and renewable energy. The emerging North American energy market has drawn the attention of the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers in the run-up to the Energy and Environmental Forum, which will be held in Québec City next week.

As you all know, American and Canadian citizens must now present a passport when traveling to the U.S. by air. This requirement, which took effect on January 23 under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, will eventually apply to land and sea travel as well. In this respect, we urge the U.S. government to wait until June 1, 2009 before implementing this initiative, based on the timeframe authorized by Congress last fall. Additional time will be needed to adequately assess measures aimed at minimizing the impacts of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

The fourth objective of Québec's International Policy is **to promote Québec's unique identity and culture**. Notre langue demeure au cœur de notre identité. Aussi, nous allons continuer de la promouvoir comme langue internationale, notamment par une participation soutenue aux travaux de la Francophonie.

Québec's creative artists have enjoyed a string of successes around the world. But in a context of rapid and profound changes affecting markets, networks and technologies, success should never be taken for granted. Our International Policy thus provides a range of tools aimed at promoting Québec culture. As part of these efforts, we intend to translate more works by Québec authors, primarily from French into English and Spanish.

Another key component of our cultural goals relates to the field of Québec studies. The expansion of academic programs and research initiatives focusing on Québec provides an opportunity to increase our awareness and understanding of Québec society and its current realities. The Institute for Québec Studies at SUNY Plattsburgh continues to play a leading role in this regard: not only does it serve the entire SUNY system, it also contributes to raising Québec's profile across America through its activities nationwide.

The fifth and final goal of Québec's International Policy is **to contribute to international solidarity efforts**. Promoting and defending one's interests carries with it the obligation to assist one's partners. We are thus targeting a number of areas in which we can offer credible solutions, such as training and governance reinforcement. The assistance we have provided in Haiti exemplifies this approach, which serves to capitalize on Québec's proven expertise. Although it may not rank among the top echelons of international lenders, Québec is one of the few stakeholders to have put in place a structured framework for international solidarity initiatives.

These are some of the choices stemming from Québec's new International Policy. I am pleased to be able to share our vision with you today. Québec is a complex, creative and dynamic society whose roots in the northeastern corner of North America date back nearly 400 years.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.