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## Mexico's Calderon thanks RCMP

By CBC News  
CBC News

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Mexican President Felipe Calderon has thanked the RCMP for its help in fighting drug violence in his country, saying it is a necessary battle as Mexico transforms itself into a modern nation.

In his address to the House of Commons in Ottawa on Thursday, Calderon said he believes progress and sustainable human development "can only be brought about in a country of laws," which is why he has deployed the "full force of the state" to meet the threat of organized crime.

"One of the most important transformations is the effort to uphold the rule of law in Mexico," Calderon told the House.

"The struggle for public security is a battle that will take time, that will take money, and unfortunately, it will also require human lives, but it is a battle that must be undertaken ... We, the people of Mexico, together, are going to win."

Mexico has seen an explosion of drug-related slayings in recent years stemming from Calderon's attempted crackdown on drug cartels, as well as rampant corruption within the country's police forces.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in turn, praised Calderon's "remarkable courage" in fighting drug cartels.

The two leaders announced the signing of bilateral air service and youth mobility agreements, as well as additional funding from Canada to support Calderon's efforts to reform Mexico's justice system and combat the drug trade.

Refugee issue 'a problem in our system': PM

In his speech at a joint news conference with Harper following a private midday meeting, Calderon again urged the Canadian government to overturn strict visa requirements it imposed on Mexico last year to slow the flow of refugees.

Calderon acknowledged some Mexicans have been "abusing the generosity" of Canada's "noble" asylum system and vowed to pursue and prosecute those who promote those actions "in any part of the world."

But Immigration Minister Jason Kenney told reporters on Thursday it will be a year or more before Canada can lift the visa requirement for Mexican visitors. Kenney said he regrets the visa decision but stressed it will remain in place until Canada's flawed refugee system is fixed.

Harper called the refugee issue "a problem in our system" that had "nothing to do" with the Mexican government and said Canada was working to correct it through changes to its refugee laws.

Kenney said asylum claims from Mexico are down 90 per cent in the last year, which has saved taxpayers \$400 million. But Calderon said Mexican tourism to Canada has dropped 40 per cent in the last 12 months.

Remove visa requirement now: NDP critic

NDP immigration critic Olivia Chow called on the Conservative government to lift the visa requirement immediately. She said the proposed immigration law changes in Bill C-11 would not solve the problem because the bill's "safe country" clause limits options for refugee applicants from countries deemed by the federal government as safe.

International human rights groups such as Amnesty International are worried that the legislation, if passed, would allow Canada to designate Mexico a "safe" country, despite serious concerns over the country's human rights record.

"How would Mexico be designated?" Chow asked.

Alongside Calderon, the prime minister acknowledged the visa requirement is "not an ideal solution" but said it was the "sole method of control when we face a torrent of bogus applications."

"If we get bogus applications, it's extremely difficult to remove people to anywhere ... under the current system," Harper said.