

Address to

Mexican Independence Day Celebration

2005 September 15
Olympic Plaza
8:00 PM

Deputy Mayor Diane Colley-Urquhart

Good evening – and thank you for inviting me to share in the celebration of Mexico’s Independence Day.

[SPANISH]

Estoy muy contenta de estar aqui para gozar de su musica, su baile, su comida, y su cultura. Gracias a todos por invitarme.

[English translation: I am delighted to be here to enjoy your music, your dancing, your food, and your culture. Thank you, everyone, for inviting me.]

[ENGLISH]

Many countries around the world are able to celebrate an independence day, and those countries are truly blessed. Too many countries are still fighting for that independence, whether it is political independence, or cultural independence, or economic independence.

Mexicans fought with great vigour to achieve that milestone, and many lives were lost. It is such a beautiful country, it is no wonder that so many others from Spain and the United States wanted to claim a piece of it. But a proud people will find their voice, as Mexicans found their voice through Hidalgo, and through Benito Juarez and through the many other Mexican leaders who took that fragile independence and have built a great nation.

Tonight we remember the bold action of Hidalgo in arresting the Spaniards in his community of Dolores, and so setting off the revolution that ultimately resulted in

Mexico's independence. But we also celebrate the subsequent achievements of that wonderful country and its equally wonderful people.

It is my great honour this evening to extend greetings to you all on behalf of His Worship Mayor Dave Bronconnier, my Council colleagues, and all of the citizens of Calgary. To those of you who live here in Calgary, let's celebrate together tonight. And for those of you who are visiting, please feel at home in our city, and take the time to share your experiences with all of us.

We are celebrating our own anniversary here in Alberta this year – our 100th anniversary since becoming a province in 1905. We are a younger place than Mexico, but I believe we share some of the same spirit.

It was my great pleasure to visit Mexico just a few months ago, such a beautiful country with friendly, warm and intelligent people who made me feel so tremendously welcome.

The people of both our countries are proud of where we live. We work hard to build our homes and communities. We are fiercely protective of our families and neighbours and friends.

Perhaps the reason we share some of those traits is because of the contributions of people from Mexico who have chosen to make their homes here in Calgary. Like the pioneers who have come from around the world over the last hundred years to settle the land of the foothills, Mexican-Canadians have contributed enormously to our vibrant economic and cultural life. We love that you have become our neighbours and our colleagues and our friends.

One more thing we have in common: we have a very bright future. We share the blessing of natural resources, and of outstanding human resources.

Mexico does indeed have a very bright and prosperous future, and Canada is so lucky to be its near neighbour and its active trading partner. Calgarians will be very pleased to welcome President Vincente Fox on September 29 when he visits us here to discuss trade and other issues.

You will all know of Calgary's very special sister-city relationship with the city of Naucalpan de Juarez, and we are so delighted this evening to have with us an official representative of that city *Licenciado Juan José Vicencio Estrada, Coordinator of Public Relations for the Mayor of Naucalpan.*

It is my special duty, as the official representative of the City of Calgary, to conduct the traditional White Hat Ceremony for our honoured guests this evening. This special ceremony has been recognized around the world as a symbol of Western hospitality – and it carries with it the privilege and responsibility of being an honorary citizen of Calgary. People who have been white-hatted become Calgary's ambassadors around the world.

In just five years, Mexico will celebrate 200 years since Hidalgo rang the bells of independence. I hope you will invite me back, because I know we will have one rip-roarin', foot-stompin' Calgary-style celebration of Mexican independence right here in Olympic Plaza on that night!

Thank you all for having me here. It is a wonderful party and a very special evening.

Now ... let's honour our special guests with their white hats.

- Vice Consul Sergio Pichardo, Consulate of Mexico in Calgary;
- Maestro Jorge Suarez, classical pianist, performing during our event, and
- Licenciado Juan José Vicencio Estrada.

[WHITE HAT CEREMONY & OATH]