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Quebec, Mexican Authorities Partner to Promote Natural Gas for Cars in Mexico

by LADB Staff

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In early November, representatives of the government of Quebec, the Mexican government, and members of the private sector from Canada and Mexico announced an agreement to cooperate in two separate energy-related projects. One project involves the conversion of vehicles in Mexico City to natural-gas power. The other is a joint venture between Hydro-Quebec International and the federal electricity commission (Comision Federal de Electricidad, CFE) to boost Mexico's capacity to export electricity to other countries in Latin America. The agreements were signed to coincide with the visit to Mexico City of Quebec's natural resources minister, Guy Chervette.

In the first project, the Quebec Natural Resources Ministry and the Energy Secretariat (SE) reached an agreement to equip 36,000 mini buses and other commercial vehicles in Mexico City with the means to use natural gas instead of gasoline. The project will be managed by Quebec-based Gas Metropolitan and Convertidores Cataliticos de Mexico. The two companies are already cooperating in a separate project to convert several commercial automobile fleets in Mexico City to natural gas power. Gas Metropolitan vice president Hung Bui-Quang told reporters that the project will cost US\$250 million and will take about six years to complete. "This could be one of the most important solutions in the fight against pollution in Mexico City," said Bui-Quang.

Chervette and Energy Secretary Jesus Reyes Heroles said the conversion will not require the construction of new facilities, since existing PEMEX stations already have pumps that can provide natural gas to motor vehicles. Meantime, the strategic alliance between Hydro-Quebec International and the CFE will focus on exploiting the potential to produce, transmit, and distribute electricity among other countries.

According to Luc Thibault, Hydro-Quebec's vice president for Latin America, his company will offer expertise to the CFE to develop international electrical systems, with the hope of tapping into a potentially large market in Latin America. CFE director Rogelio Gasca Neri said the changes in electricity regulations, which allow private companies to generate electricity for their own use and to sell power to the CFE, have already attracted a significant amount of investment to the energy sector. Because of the increased private investment, said Gasca, the CFE can now devote more attention to developing projects such as the one signed with Hydro-Quebec. (Sources: El Economista, 11/05/96; The News, Novedades, 11/06/96)

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