

Radio Broadcast of President Rafael Correa

Saturday, February 21, 2009. Ambato

At 11:30 in the morning we had a meeting with a group of Canadian businessmen.

Canada is very interested in investing in Ecuador. Furthermore, Canada is both one of our closest friends and represents a huge market for Ecuador. But, for some unexplained reason, it has been practically unexplored and unexploited, despite its immense potential.

It's a vast market, home to dozens of millions of inhabitants. It's one of the largest countries in the world, housing a wealth of natural resources and has one of the world's most developed and responsible mining industries. The greatest beneficiaries of this industry are – listen to this – the native Canadian peoples.

In fact, I've invited a group of these people over so they can explain how mining can be responsible.

So, just as mining can mean plunder, irresponsibility, environmental destruction, contaminated water, devastation in the communities where mining takes place, mining can also mean environmental care – there'll always be an environmental impact, but it can be repaired –, care of water resources and, most of all, employment and prosperity for the communities where the project is implemented.

The mining industry has been a notable success in Canada, even with the indigenous Canadians in their territories. We're going to bring over a group of these indigenous people so they can give their own version and dispel the myths propagated by people who I would like to think seek the common good but, believe me, after two years' experience it's difficult to believe. The truth is that they want to live in their fantasy world, feed on their own dreams, saying: "no mining", in the name of the indigenous communities, in the name of the poor people but what they are actually doing is punishing those poor people, punishing those indigenous communities, communities that are undeveloped and that need – just like the whole country – the revenues that mining generates. What I keep saying to them is: we can't be beggars while we sit on a bag of gold.

But we're not only talking about investing in mining, we're also talking about construction and tourism. Each year, 22,000 Canadians visit Ecuador. Eight years ago, the Dominican Republic received 22,000 Canadian tourists, now it receives 800,000. If they can do it, why can't we? Of course we can launch an aggressive plan, and we've already discussed the subject with the respective ministry to see what can be done to attract Canadian tourists, correct?

And there are many other types of projects as well, involving petroleum, mining and tourism. Also present in the meeting was the Canadian Ambassador in Ecuador, Christian Lapointe, as well as various business people who are either investing or wish to invest in Ecuador.

I repeat, there's already a lot of investment in mining, but they're also interested in petroleum, in refineries, in infrastructure, in tourism, etc. Indeed, many key projects in Ecuador are being financed with Canadian investment. This refutes the myth that foreign investment isn't coming to Ecuador. The major investors continue to come to Ecuador because they know that we have responsible government here. For example, we have the Quito airport, a very large investment. There are also the major mining projects.

There's also another hugely important project being undertaken by the Canadians – whose name escapes me for the moment. So relations with Canada are excellent and we expect to receive further investment in the future. Ah, no, here we are! The mining sector, the petroleum sector, Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe is one of the largest investments in the last few years, involving almost five billion dollars using state-of-the-art technology.

So the Canadians are undertaking key investments in the country's development and are thinking of investing a great deal more.

That's why the Aecon group – also constructors – came. They are involved in the construction of the Quito airport. Lavalin was also here. I'm not too sure about the pronunciation, but it's a major construction company that is very interested in investing in Ecuador, as is the Canadian Commercial Corporation, which is like a CORPEI in Canada. It promotes Canadian services and one of their representatives visited us.