

# WILL CANADA BECOME A CARIBBEAN NATION?

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

Since September 11 traditional markets have become more difficult to access for political, security and competitive reasons. Canada must explore other opportunities and seek out new trade and economic relationships. The Caribbean is one such desirable trade area.

The enthusiasm for an expanded relationship between the Turks and Caicos Islands and Canada continues to grow. Numerous calls and letters have flowed in from supporters across Canada and the Islands, excited by the possibility of a Canadian Caribbean Confederation. While confederating with the Turks and Caicos may well be an elusive goal, it is well worth exploring the potential that could better position Canada to expand its trade and political influence to the Caribbean and Caribbean "RIM" Nations.

In the spring of 2004, both Prime Minister Paul Martin and Leader of the Official Opposition Stephen Harper indicated a willingness to meet with the elected Chief Minister of the Turks and Caicos, Dr. Michael Eugene Misick.

However, because of the election campaign uncertainty the status of the meeting is presently unclear. Despite the delay, the will and desire to meet represented a significant step forward in the relationship from previous years and decades when such a relationship was rejected by the Federal Government in the past. While much has been previously written of the numerous benefits to both Canada and the Turks and Caicos for such

a union, it is also important to examine the international implications and benefits associated with such a venture, particularly the colonial history of Turks and Caicos, its relationship with the United Kingdom, trade and security in the region, and how a union with Canada would happen.



Peter Goldring, Member of Parliament for Edmonton East is promoting close social & economic ties with the Caribbean group of nations.

The Turks and Caicos have a colonial legacy much like Canada and other Caribbean nations in the region. It has been under the control of both the British Jamaican and Bahamas Governors, but later was issued an independent Governor when both Jamaica and



the Bahamas gained independence. The independence of Caribbean nations happened in the international anti-colonial context of the 1960's, where many former colonies were gaining independence either through armed revolution or peaceful transition. The union of the Turks and Caicos with Canada would represent a natural progression of its pragmatic and peaceful history, melding quite nicely with our own progression to democratic rule and independence from the British Empire over 135 years ago.

Despite near self-rule, Turks and Caicos remains an overseas territory of the United Kingdom. Legally this entails some constitutional control by the United Kingdom in the areas of security and foreign policy, while practically the Islands maintain an internal democratic form of government and independence. Because of their connection to the United Kingdom, the residents of Turks and Caicos also enjoy participation in the European Union (EU), including the right to relocate and receive education in EU member states and to receive development aid from the United Kingdom and the EU. The Turks and Caicos Islands are one of twenty island and island chains that are overseas protectorates or territories of states such as Denmark, the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom remains committed to the

Turks and Caicos as an Overseas Territory for as long as they wish to sustain the relationship. In this respect, the United Kingdom represents no impediment should a merger with Canada become desirous. In fact, built on the United Kingdom's stated principles of respect for overseas territory sovereignty, they would readily defer to any democratic wish by the people of Turks and Caicos to pursue their own destiny with Canada.

Regionally, the Turks and Caicos also participate as an Associate Member in the Caribbean Community or CARICOM. CARICOM integrates its members into a common market economy, while also dealing with regional security issues like the recent troubling events in Haiti. The Turks and Caicos Islands recently gave permission for Canada to stage its troops

before landing in Haiti. The islands' participation as a Canadian province in CARICOM would provide an excellent institutional, economic, and security segue into the Caribbean community for Canada. Canadian trade and influence could be greatly expanded into the region. While CARICOM represents only a small portion of the countries in the region, they represent a growing population of over five million people, and close to a \$2 billion economy. By joining with the Turks and Caicos, Canada will be participating in an



Brad Sigoun, MP Peter Goldring Edmonton East, MP  
Massimo Pacetti, Saint Leonard-Saint-Michael with  
Rosemarie Wilson, Turks & Caicos Agent.



exciting and dynamic new economy that will greatly add to and diversify both countries economic outlook.

In recent years Canada’s traditional trading partners for manufactured finished goods, forestry, cattle and farm products have shrunk for a variety of competitive and political reasons. A substantive trade market exists throughout the Caribbean for these and other Canadian resource and manufactured products. Canadian maritime container shipping ports can actively develop this trade potential through a deep water distribution port developed in the Turks and Caicos designed to serve domestic requirements but also a population of over 100 million persons of not only the Caribbean market but also Caribbean RIM countries such as Mexico, Central American states, and portions of South America.



**Peter Goldring MP Edmonton East at Tourism Trade Show with Rosemarie Wilson, Turks and Caicos Agent and Anne Broban, Caribbean Tourism Organization.**

In contemplating a union between Canada and the Turks and Caicos, there are some issues that must be resolved, such as the concerns over the Turks and Caicos financial and banking sectors. However, these concerns are now being addressed, as the islands have begun a process of financial sector reform in keeping with their territorial agreement with the United Kingdom.

Canada is able to provide a stable economic and political transition in conjunction with a confederation with the Turks and Caicos Islands. This could be accomplished with

the federal government establishing a coastal protection and patrol base with search and rescue helicopter provisions. Similarly, a commitment by Canada in areas such as post-secondary education will help address the need for greatly increased training for expanded economic and employment opportunities in a diversified Turks and Caicos marketplace.

Besides an economic transition, Canada would also instigate a parliamentary process for the addition of the Turks and Caicos Islands to Confederation. The most likely scenario is that Turks and Caicos would be invited into Confederation much like Newfoundland was invited in 1949. Canada’s Constitution does provide for additional members in Confederation, with the Turks and Caicos Islands having control over provincial areas of interests, while also specifically having input in areas such as the culture and immigration.

The international context points to exciting possibilities for both Canada and the Turks and Caicos. In our emerging century, new forms of governance are taking hold, with old forms of state governance falling away. We can see this in the newly emerging European Union, or Organization of African States. In summary, these trends coupled with Canada and Turks and Caicos Islands’ joint history, point to significant potential for a new relationship, potentially even provincial status, and

include more specifically:

A peaceful colonial history that mimics Canada's own move towards confederation and independence from Britain

- A willing and respectful United Kingdom, which has already provided the institutional relationship with parliamentary democracy and respect for territorial sovereignty
- A dynamic and emerging regional trading and governance bloc—CARICOM—that can provide enhanced potential for Canadian trade products in the region
- A Canadian constitutional process of federalism that will constitutionally respect the Islands' unique history and culture
- A positive business outlook for both the

Turks and Caicos and Canada while providing improved constitutional provisos for the Turks and Caicos Islands within provincial rule.

- A closer association with the Caribbean specifically represented by the province of Turks and Caicos Islands could only enhance trade, cultural, humanitarian, and security interests for all concerned

What is required now is the political will and vision to make it happen. Should we finally ask the question, end our long-standing dalliance, and ask the Turks and Caicos to officially become our eleventh province—what do you think?

**Update:** All party support for this initiative is expected to be renewed on the resumption of Parliament this fall with a viewpoint to explore close association between Canada and the diverse countries and protectorates of the Caribbean in order to enhance trade cultural, humanitarian and security interest for all concern.

9111 - 118th Ave.  
Edmonton, AB T5B OT9  
(780) 495-3261  
Fax: 495-5142

Web Site:  
www.petergoldring.ca  
Email:  
goldrp1@parl.gc.ca

411 Justice Bldg.  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
(613) 992-3821  
Fax: 992-6898

*This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.*

**Your Opinion Matters...**

**Question #1** Do you believe that Canada can do more to encourage the trade of Canadian made goods and farm products in the Caribbean and South America?

Yes       No

**Question #2** Do you think that Canada and the Turks and Caicos Islands should continue exploratory talks for a possible union to be ratified by all citizens of both countries?

Yes       No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_



**Peter Goldring**  
Member of Parliament  
Edmonton East  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6