



September 7th—Hurricane Ivan veered away from a path expected to strike St. Lucia and Barbados and instead plowed into Grenada, a island considered out of the Hurricane Alley in the Caribbean. I decided to visit Grenada to assess her needs in Ivan's aftermath.

The strength of Hurricane Ivan, which struck Grenada on September 7, was estimated minimally at 150 mph or 240 kmph winds, with tornado gusts of who knows what strength. With heavy sheet metal roofing torn off buildings lodged a mile away and with roof tiles flying like shrapnel, it is a wonder that hundreds did not perish.

The scene while flying in a Canadian-made Dash 8 flown by Liat Air from Barbados, over the Grenadines towards Grenada, was so picturesque. Idyllic small islands of lush foliage, sandy bays ringed with small colourful communities, both power and sail boats riding the waves. Then Grenada. Grenada's shore approaches. Immediately, the view of the scene is decidedly different, as multiple bright blue rooftops appear: the organized blue of emergency tarpaulins amidst the shattered remnants of homes beyond repair. The landscape is strewn with the refuse of the aftermath of a once in 50 year disaster.



Standing in the ruins of a resort hotel in Grenada is John Miller with hotel owner. This is but one example of Ivan's devastation of the hotel industry.

Landing at Point Salines Airport in Grenada, a debarkation stair vehicle was tossed by the wind into a field between runways. The drive from the airport was surreal. The devastation of the island was nearly complete, with the resilience of the islanders being one of the main elements left standing. The mainstay crop of nutmeg—30% of the country's export in-

come—was totally destroyed. The trees that were not uprooted and broken apart were totally stripped of foliage from the winds of the storm. The crop won't return for 10 years. The market for Caribbean



nutmeg may be lost for many more years.

Boats in the harbour were blasted ashore and literally stacked on one another. Even forty foot catamarans, large stable crafts, were stripped of their masts and then flipped like pancakes into the melee. The Parliament buildings, major churches, schools, the jail and the governor's residence are all suffering from the same hurricane bomb blast damage as were homes and businesses. Two weeks after the disaster, the population is still stranded in absolute shock and squalor. Cell phone service has returned, but there is no power. No electricity to keep fresh fruit, vegetables, meats and daily produce cool, but not to worry—they're not available anyway.

Where is Canada? The thirsty, the hungry, the homeless and the threatened cannot drink, eat, house or police themselves with mere relief cheques. Dollars cannot feed the hungry. Dollars cannot shelter the homeless or secure the threatened. Canada's 200 person Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) is still waiting in Kingston for orders that haven't come.

The people and equipment of DART are the frontlines of Canada's disaster assistance response capability that is not being called out. Why?



Former resident of Trenton Ontario who recently sold his house to buy a boat, now wrecked by Ivan, standing with Peter Goldring, Member of Parliament.

Grenada needs disaster assistance, emergency supplies, and a security team presence now. Then Grenada needs the helping hand up to return business and industry to self-sufficiency. Neighbouring Caribbean countries are all gathering to help. The people of Grenada are finding the resolve and fortitude to pick them-

selves up and prepare to rebuild, but much help is needed. Perhaps as a signal of Canada's renewed social and economic interest in Caribbean markets, a strong, positive humanitarian gesture would be particularly appropriate at this time. Now being overshadowed by the disaster in Haiti, the urgency of the needs in Grenada becomes lost in public and political perceptions and priorities. Canada could right now be contributing by at least helping to quickly rebuild the island schools. The children must return to school, away from their damaged homes, while their parents rebuild their lives.





In the short term, massive humanitarian assistance is required. In the medium term, the rebuilding of the infrastructure and the businesses of trade and tourism is crucial. Hotel and business owners must be encourage by government to rebuild and to reopen, in order to recreate the jobs based on foreign dollars that are desperately needed. In the longer term, it is important to work with other countries to develop a strategy to diversify the economy of Grenada and which meets with the as-



MP Peter Goldring thanks Canadian High Commissioner of the Eastern Caribbean region of countries, Michael Welsh, for all the help and assistance of him and his office.

pirations of Grenadians. With other countries, Canada should offer to be part of a more complete rapid reaction group of nations, capable of responding to the needs of national calamities in the area. For an emerging response unit such as DART to never leave the “garage” is a sad testament to both poor planning and ineffectual geopolitical engagement by Canada. It is important to mention that in this disaster, many countries have pulled together to help. Fortunately for Grenada, Venezuela and Trinidad immediately sent troops to provide civil stability and assistance. Many Caribbean countries have mounted individual publicly supported relief efforts to raise funds. Canada has sent \$500,000 to the

Red Cross and has apparently offered another \$1,000,000 in assistance. However, Canada has no presence on the frontlines of direct humanitarian assistance other than the Canadian High Commission and his staff who obviously see the need for more help. Even first rate representation by the High Commissioner Michael Walsh and his advisors can only do so much with such limited resources.

The disaster in Grenada points to the fact that few governments ever plan for a calamity that absolutely flattens their country. In such completely unanticipated circumstances, a helping hand is needed in many ways, and for a very long time—long after the sensational news headlines fade. While Canada’s commitment to help, however limited over the long-term, is appreciated, its contribution to short-term emergency needs remains rather lacklustre and quite frankly surprising. A more robust commitment to provide both short-term and longer-term assistance will go a long way to strengthening Canada’s relationship with Grenada and the other countries of the Caribbean Rim.

While hurricanes have ravaged the Carib-

bean this year, relief efforts, including Canadian relief efforts, are essential for all concerned. Because of Canada and other's response delays, this also becomes a time to seriously consider how future natural disasters in the Caribbean and throughout the world might better be addressed by Canada and the international community. Responding to calamities befalling the Caribbean in the future could be greatly improved by a permanent Canadian platform of social, economic and humanitarian aid operations being located in the region. There has been interest expressed for much improved social-economic relations with Canada by several Caribbean countries.

Canada has an excellent name throughout the region, built up by well over 100 years of trading and immigration to and from the region. Canadian presence and influence in the region has been diminishing of late, to the detriment of Canada and the Canadian government, in terms of mutual economic and political benefits. Today, Canadians in large numbers vacation in the Caribbean. Meanwhile, mainland China, Taiwan, Japan and Venezuela are growing in economic influence in the region; Canada must do better socially and economically, but first must do better in the humanitarian field.

**Update:** Two weeks after Grenada was hit by Ivan, Haiti and the Cayman Islands were also hit. Haiti is particularly suffering with extensive loss of life, hunger, and disease. Serious questions have arose concerning Canada's social, economic, and humanitarian response to the disasters.

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*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** Should we seek export markets in the Caribbean for Canadian business and farm products?

☐ Yes

☐ No

**Question #2** Should Canada have sent the DART response team to Grenada to help?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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