



MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

Many appreciate the benefits of enhanced economic and related relationships between Canada and countries of the Caribbean Rim. There is also a growing appreciation that such market expansion is a matter of economic imperative, based on a need to have a more diversified export market for Canada.

Overview

Last year, I spent considerable time and effort exploring political and economic opportunities for a special relationship between Canada and the Turks and Caicos Islands. While discussions continue, the majority public response, particularly in Canada, has been quite positive. The effort certainly demonstrated the need and desire for more intensified dialogue on issues of common concern throughout the Caribbean region.

Recent events unfolding in the Caribbean call for a further review of our Caribbean relationship beyond a political and economic review to include security and humanitarian issues. In particular, political instability in Haiti

compounded by weak national security, raised concerns as to the effectiveness of Canada's multimillion dollar foreign aid contributions to the rebuilding of Haiti. In early 2004, Canada also was asked to send 500 troops as part of a United Nations security team deployed in Haiti. In August of 2004, well in advance of the completion of the UN mandate in Haiti—which continues to this day—Canada's forces were inexplicably withdrawn. Within weeks, former members of the Haitian army were occupying police stations and entire towns within 60 miles of the capital, Port-Au-Prince. Just this past weekend, two United Nations peacekeepers were shot, amidst continuing deteriorations of social order.



Hurricane Ivan devastated Grenada, destroying or damaging 90% of all buildings. Canadian aid could have at least helped to rebuild schools.

Then much of the Caribbean region was affected by the devastation of Hurricane Ivan and Tropical Storm Jeanne. Haiti, Grenada and the Cayman Islands were particularly affected. In the case of Grenada and the Cayman Islands,

virtually the entire geographical area was destroyed. This widespread destruction was accompanied by death, injury and social disorder. In the case of Haiti, the ravages of Hurricane Ivan were significant with large areas under water, though the primary loss of life occurred from mudslides around Gonaives caused



by Tropical Storm Jeanne.

My initial view of my Critic role was that it would be an opportunity to encourage the enhancement of political, social, and economic relationships with the countries and territories of the Caribbean Rim. One reason for this redirection of Canadian regional interests is the fact that protectionist sentiments in an increasingly globalized marketplace has resulted in greater restrictions on the export of Canadian goods. Our principal trading partner, the United States, has closed its borders to Canadian beef and, previously, had acted to restrict Canadian softwood lumber exports. It is clear that Canada must intensify its foreign affairs efforts to seek new and favourable export markets and economic opportunities.

Given the devastation from Hurricane Ivan, focus changed to that of analyzing and encouraging Canada's humanitarian contribution to the region. I visited the east Caribbean region during the week of September 19, ten days after Hurricane Ivan had hit. My visit was intended to be a fact-finding mission relating to humanitarian concerns and the prospect for enhanced economic opportunities for Canada in the Caribbean. In the company of the Canadian High Commissioner to Barbados, Michael Welsh, I visited the devastated island of Grenada. I then held trade and economic development talks with government and business representatives in St. Lucia, Dominica and Barbados.

An Enhanced Canadian Economic, Cultural, Humanitarian and Security Role in the Caribbean: General

While hurricanes have ravaged the Caribbean this year, rapid response relief efforts, including Canadian relief efforts are essential for all concerned. Because of delays in response on the part of Canada and other nations, we must seriously consider how future natural disasters in the Caribbean and throughout the world might better be addressed by our country and the international community. Re-



Meeting in St. Lucia with Mr. Cosmos Richardson, Permanent Secretary of External Affairs, and other officials discussing economic development interests.

sponding 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. While too early to precisely define the nature of a Canadian-Caribbean platform, a greatly improved regional influence would be very advantageous to all. This view is supported by interest expressed by the governments of several Caribbean countries in improving closer social and economic relations with Canada.

Canada has an excellent name throughout the region, built up by well over 100 years of trading and migration to and from the region. Canadian presence and influence in the region has been diminishing of late, to the detriment of Canada, in terms of mutual economic and politi-



cal benefits. As Canadian manufacturers and food processors rely heavily on a north-south distribution system, through the United States, little current Canadian trade with the Caribbean makes the journey through the American trade filter. Today, Canadians in large numbers vacation in the Caribbean.

However, Canadian-made consumer goods and food products are scarcely on the Caribbean store shelves, even though Caribbean nations seeking more and more from alternate sources to American suppliers. In response, mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, and Venezuela are growing in economic influence in the region. Economic influence becomes interrelated with economic aid. For example, China is building schools and athletic stadiums in the region, while Japan has constructed a major fishing port in Dominica. Canada can do much better socially and economically in the region, but first we must do better in the humanitarian field—consistent with the constructive patterns of influence of other nations.

With the international competitive pressures mounting in traditional markets for Canadian products, we simply must explore other market possibilities. The Caribbean is a natural, neighbourly, and friendly place for renewed Canadian economic attention. Caribbean countries are actively seeking alliances for economic and social benefit. This is the time for Canada to aggressively renew and pursue significant economic and social relationship with the countries

and territories of the Caribbean Rim.

Based on the celebrated Canadian multicultural model, we are in a unique position to be a favoured partner in the Caribbean. We are sensitive to and understanding of the fact that



Peter Goldring, MP with the Honourable Edison C. James, MP and Leader of the U.W.P. Official Opposition Party of Dominica, discussing social-economic concerns.

Canadian economic growth in the Caribbean must occur in step with helping to bring about economic development, diversity and human security for our Caribbean partners. Put simply, Canada is a trusted partner in the eyes of the majority of countries in the Caribbean Rim. This allows further access and opportunity to areas such as the South America marketplace, in addition to the strict

Caribbean region.

Common Economic Issues

A common concern among the Caribbean countries I visited was the sense that Canada was pulling back from the Caribbean, politically and economically, content to support tourism only. While the countries are perhaps small by themselves, the Eastern Caribbean Rim region represents a community and marketplace of over one million people, while its southern Caribbean Rim influence could be 20 million or more. The need for more active and conscientious Canadian engagement in the region is of prime concern. Canadian goals and policy in the region are somewhat haphazard and in need of refinement. Goals should be clearly established in relation to three principal areas:

economic development, disaster management and humanitarian assistance. There is much interest in the region for enhanced Canadian involvement to develop a direct, deep water trade route to Canada, for Canadian economic involvement or partnership in value added diversified farm production, food processing, manufacturing and facility construction, as well as for involvement in business and personal telecommunication delivery systems, geothermal energy sources and free trade transshipping ports.

Conclusion

My visit to Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia, and Dominica, demonstrated that an enhanced relationship with Canada is very much sought and desired by our friends in the Caribbean.

They also want Canada to develop stronger working relationships with established regional organizations, such as CARICOM (the Caribbean Community and Common Market) and OECS (the Organization of East Caribbean States). Canada should seek closer associations with the diverse countries, protectorates and representative organizations of the Caribbean for the enhancement of trade, economic development, cultural, humanitarian and security interests for all concerned. Of greatest importance is the basic fact that if Canada will not engage the Caribbean in these areas, others will gladly do so, resulting in major lost opportunities for Canada.

Update: Recent events in Haiti involving disintegrating civil control and desperate need for aid securely delivered to the most needy, raises the spectre that a re-examination of foreign aid, foreign affairs, and economic engagement with the centres of the Caribbean is necessary.

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 Should we seek economic development opportunities in the Caribbean for Canadian business and farming industries?

Yes No

Question #2 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

Comments: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Postal Code: _____
Telephone: _____



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