



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 Islands, Dr. Michael Eugene Misick.

The 2004 federal election campaign, resulted in uncertainty regarding the status of the meeting. Despite the delay, the will and desire to meet represented a significant step forward in the relationship from previous years and decades when the Canadian Government had rejected such a relationship. Almost one full year later, a similar situation is unfolding. A proposed trip to Ottawa, by Chief Minister Michael Misick, for May 19th, 2005, has been postponed due to concerns that another spring federal election in Canada may be close at hand.



Peter Goldring, MP Edmonton East, Brad Sigouin and Richard Pearson of "A Place in the Sun" and Massimo Pacetti, MP Saint Leonard-Saint Michel.

Efforts to move this initiative forward continue in spite of other political priorities, which currently must take precedence. I certainly maintain my belief that it is time to have the people speak up on the acceptability of a union between the two countries. Recall that the

last major effort to move forward a Canada-Turks and Caicos initiative, occurred in the 1980s when members of the Turks and Caicos government visited Ottawa to ask Canada to consider some form of "special relationship" with their country. At the time, the Mulroney government nixed the request. However, the world is very different now. Communications are instant; Computers and portable cellular phones have taken big business into small communities. People worldwide are now more interconnected through the Internet and a post-September 11th world has caused us to appreciate and value personal security and friendly places to visit.

Currently, some 450,000 Canadians now vacation in the Caribbean. Well over one million Canadians vacation outside of Canada leaving billions of dollars in foreign countries' coffers. If even 10 percent of this

vacation travel, or 100,000 people were to visit the Canadian province of Turks and Caicos, the social effects would be negligible but the boost to the islands economy would be incredible. However, I want to make it clear that access to a warm travel destination "within Canada" cannot or should not be the primary



motivation for any Canada-Turks and Caicos initiative moving forward. After all, some have argued that if the Turks and Caicos were to become Canada's 11th Province, the islands would become inundated by asylum-seekers from the Caribbean, as well as by Canadians wanting to move to the Turks and Caicos Islands permanently to build retirement condos.

The CBC's "The Fifth Estate," recently aired a program on April 27th 2005, which examined the concept of a Canada-Turks and Caicos Islands union. The program highlighted the racial tensions, which have

resulted from the building of retirement condos and other development initiatives on the islands. Recall that it is this concern over racial tensions, which was a critical factor in the Mulroney Cabinet nixing the idea of a Canada-Turks and Caicos Islands partnership in the 1980s. There is a concern expressed by many islanders, themselves, that the natural beauty and ecosystem of the islands could become degraded through over population. The unique situation of the Turks and Caicos calls for general recognition that exceptional measures must be taken with Provincial regulation of immigration and residency to preserve its unique culture from being inundated with immigrants, while at the same time encouraging investors and tourists. Here, Canada's multiculturalism policy could play a prominent role in helping to safeguard and preserve Island-

ers' culture from becoming adversely affected by development initiatives, be they Canadian or foreign.

With the recent involvement of Canadian troops in Haiti, there is another dimension

that merits consideration when addressing whether Canada should have a more formal relationship with the Turks and Caicos Islands. While Canadian peacekeeping expertise is called for in the Caribbean, the home base of any operation is extremely remote. If Turks and Caicos were Canada's 11th Province, Canada would be in a position

to more readily offer assistance. For example, Canada could have facilities on the islands for a 1000 member rotated security and patrol force involved in tropical training exercises supported by long range search and rescue helicopter and coastal patrol boats. This force would include members from the islands who have chosen to join Canada's security forces and would be readily available for natural disasters and emergencies. It is worth noting that there are social problems that are common to both countries. Canada and the Turks and Caicos have immigration and illegal drug trafficking difficulties—coincidentally of considerable concern to their shared neighbouring country, the United States. A common immigration and anti-drug strategy by both regions would be beneficial to help resolve, or at least minimize these difficulties.



January 2004-The Turks and Caicos Islands Chief Minister, the Honourable Michael Misick, meets with Member of Parliament Peter Goldring, on Grand Turks.



Enthusiasm for an expanded relationship between the Turks and Caicos Islands and Canada continues to exist. 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, I believe it is equally relevant to explore the potential that could better position Canada to expand a positive trade and political influence to the Caribbean and Caribbean "RIM" Nations. Regionally, the



Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands Jim Poston and Canadian Member of Parliament Peter Goldring conclude a very cordial meeting.

Turks and Caicos also participate as an Associate Member in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CARICOM is currently integrating its members into a common market economy, while also dealing with regional security issues such as those, which continue to unfold in Haiti. In March 2004, the Turks and Caicos Islands 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 in a positive way. This would be historic and would elevate the stature of both Canada and the Caribbean on the world stage.

While CARICOM represents only seven

percent of the countries in the region, they represent a growing population of over 14 million and a US\$46 billion economy. By joining with Turks and Caicos, Canada would be participating in an exciting and dynamic new economy that would greatly add to and diversify

both countries' economic outlook. While Canada would be expanding its positive influence South into the Caribbean region through CARICOM, an historic event would be observed world wide as the Canadian province of Turks and Caicos became the first Caribbean member of the G8 nations. The Turks and Caicos Islands currently have

one of the most successful economies in the entire Caribbean region. Through "Provincial Status," Canada could demonstrate good faith in their islands' economic success by giving them a voice at the table of the G8 nations.

The opportunities presented by Canada pursuing closer economic ties with the Caribbean are further revealed through Canada's new *International Policy Statement* of April 2005, which spoke of Canada taking a more prominent role in world affairs. As part of Canada's newly released Foreign Policy Review Strategy, the Canadian Government expressed its desire, among other things, to establish new markets and trade opportunities with Brazil. Other than an expressed commitment to continue economic support to Haiti, no larger Canadian strategy to engage the Carib-

bean RIM region and the South American market was outlined in the Government's Foreign Policy Review Statement. Through the establishment of closer economic and political ties with CARICOM, Canada could be partnering with a region that is a geographical doorway to Brazil and South America. I firmly believe the Government of Canada is demonstrating a lack of vision in failing to see the importance of the Caribbean RIM region to Canadian foreign and trade policy.

Exciting possibilities for both Canada and the Turks and Caicos Islands exist in our emerging new century. New forms of governance are taking hold as witnessed in the newly emerging European Union or Organization of

African States. Overall, a closer association with the Caribbean, specifically represented by the province of the Turks and Caicos Islands, could only enhance trade, cultural, humanitarian and security interests for all concerned. Canada's founding fathers did not falter in their vision of a country of many diverse regions united together for peace and prosperity to the benefit of all. What is now required is the political will and vision expressed both by the Canadian people, as well as those from the Caribbean region, to make it happen.

Update: I continue to give my full support to help drive this wonderful idea to a successful conclusion. Should we finally end our long-standing dalliance, and ask the question: Should the Turks and Caicos Islands officially become our eleventh province-what do you think?

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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 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 explore improved political, economic, and humanitarian regional cooperation?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
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