



With the Turks & Caicos Island having full provincial status in Canada, the Turks & Caicos Islands would greatly benefit by the tremendous political & economic influence they would have throughout the entire Caribbean region while retaining their Islands Distinctiveness & Culture.

As national and international interest in the mutual exploration of a new relationship between Canada and the Turks and Caicos Islands grows, there are some who suggest that there are many, including islanders, who are opposed to discussions. At this point, opinions, while encouraged for or against the idea, are being made without the benefit of further examination of the details, and are rather premature. A thorough examination of the possible benefits, by the citizenry of both countries of facts put forward in a rational, dispassionate manner, followed by an open public debate, should be a precondition to definitive opinions being expressed for or against. After all, the upside to any successful negotiation is often

benefits for both sides. In the meantime, this international discussion has brought much goodwill, attention and hundreds of thousands of dollars in free advertising to the Turks and Caicos Island nation.

It is important to keep in mind that the political direction of the current Turks and Caicos Islands government, headed by Chief Minister The Honourable Michael Misick, is that of a "full internal govern-ance". This refers to the ability of island-

ers to determine their future direction, entirely free from British influence. This position neither restricts nor prohibits the possibility of an enhanced relationship with Canada, if islanders so wish. Indeed, Chief Minister Misick has publicly stated to Canadian media that he welcomes

further discussions as to an enhanced relationship with Canada. As an elected representative and government leader of the Turks and Caicos Islands, charged



A scene on Grand Turks Island that exemplifies the uniqueness and character of the island that is important to preserve.



with the responsibility to serve and promote the betterment of his country's people, Chief Minister Misick's willingness to explore new opportunities for the islanders, which could also result in benefits for Canada, is to be welcomed.

In January of this year I visited the Turks and Caicos in order to examine potential business opportunities for the Islands chain and for Canada. While the Turks and Caicos have obviously benefited from good government and have a well-educated population, there are significant infrastructure needs that remain to be met in order for the Islanders to advance economically. For example, there are only slightly over 125 kilometres of road on the islands, and many of these are so bad that new cars, very expensive to import, generally need be replaced after only three years of regular road travel. It must also be appreciated that less than 10% of the island chain has been fully developed at present. The cost of linking islands by a system of inter-island causeways still remains beyond the Islands' current economic means. The shallow water causeway development, combined with deep-water ports on South Caicos and Grand Turk, would dramatically change the economic character of the islands.

Deep-water container shipping transport from Canada's Maritimes with trade product redistribution throughout the Caribbean, from South Caicos and Grand Turk, would greatly diversify the Islands' economy and bring to the Islands consumer goods and food products at reduced cost. With deep-water shipping ports and causeway development, the central islands could be considered for agriculture, tourism and small to medium manufacturing or processing facilities, all of which would provide job diversification and a permanent infrastructure support base made possible by business development. A deep-water port on Grand Turk would also allow for cruise ship docking. The possibilities are literally endless. The Island government would, of course, control all development of the region.



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

Popular support among Islanders for a relationship with Canada has declined from twenty years ago, when an estimated 90% of the population supported exploring some form of union. Twenty years ago, it was the Canadian government that rejected the Islanders' overtures, for reasons that might be regarded now as somewhat shortsighted amidst the multicultural mêlé that is 21st



century Canada. Twenty years ago the Canadian government appeared to be concerned more with possible racial and cultural disharmonies than with benefits gained by mutually combining our cultural and economic efforts. It is because the Islands' past friendly overtures were rejected that it is estimated by some that the support among islanders for a renewed discussion for a relationship with Canada is not the 90% as before, but now at around 60%.

Provincial status is being proposed for the Turks and Caicos so that it could be an impressive influence in the Caribbean region, politically and economically. The Turks and Caicos could become a model of economic diversity and social well being for the region. Given its provincial status, there would also be respect for the culture of the Turks and

Caicos, as a matter of course. This is because a provincial Turks and Caicos government would operate in ways that should not run counter to the "full internal governance" platform of the current Turks and Caicos government. Canada's constitution specifically respects provincial jurisdictional independence, reinforced by decades of constitutional debate. The legacy of such federal respect is found in the greatly enhanced autonomy of Canada's current ten provinces, which has

evolved over time. Such federal enhancement and respect for provincial autonomy complements the initiative to explore the possibility of bringing another province—the Turks and Caicos—into the Confederation.

Most recently, Canadian provinces have lobbied for greater control over immigration, using our Quebec model of a provincial immigration control regime as a precedent. That very precedent might mean that certain specific immigration requirements of a Turks

and Caicos government should not run counter to the proposed provincial status that is being explored. It is also worthwhile to look to Canadian experiences with regional economic development to see how economic development in the Turks and Caicos could grow, without threatening the cultural or territorial integrity of the

islands. Due to the relatively undeveloped current state of the Turks and Caicos, there is a rare opportunity to be able to custom design the Islands' future, according to the wishes of its residents, to ensure balances among natural and population ecologies and economic benefits. With a resplendent canvas of such pristine beauty in the Islands, great care must be taken with the brushes of progress to preserve the artwork of nature.



Interior of one of the oldest churches on Grand Turks. The history of the Islands is that of being the earliest exploration land point contact of the Americans by Europeans

For all parties of interest, I believe that efforts at this point should be spent reinforcing our mutual friendship and engaging in constructive dialogue, informing citizens of both Canada and the Turks and Caicos of the social and economic benefits possible in proceeding and giving reassurance that every and all contemplations will involve those most important to a final decision, the people. Only at that time--not today, not tomorrow or even this year--a question should be asked of all Islanders and Canadians, based on a full understanding by all of the initiative.

northern giant, and whose last confederated province was a British territory, Newfoundland in 1949, is wrestling with this new expansionism prospect but does not want to be thought of as a colonialist. For the Turks and Caicos Islands, the relationship with England has served Islanders very well. The Islanders live in one of the most stable and peaceful nations in the Caribbean. They nonetheless want to grow and to find that particular association that will permit them to reach their full potential. Confederation with Canada – Maybe? Perhaps the time has come to end the courtship and to finally be wed.

It is a huge step for both countries to take. Canada, often thought of as a benevolent

Update: Member of Parliament and committee Member Massimo Pacetti spoke with Prime Minister Paul Martian who has in turn talked to Chief Minister Michael Misick about an official visit to Ottawa. Efforts to encourage exploration and dialogue leading to a formal relation is across Political Party Lines.

9111 - 118th Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5B 0T9
(780) 495-3261
Fax: 495-5142

Web Site:
www.petergoldring.ca
E-mail:
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 and 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: _____

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



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