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The location of this new potential province is, as you may have guessed, the Turks and Caicos Islands which, while 2,000km from Ottawa, is closer than Ed-

monton. The concept of Canada 'uniting' or creating a 'special relationship' with the Turks and Caicos is certainly nothing new. The idea that the Turks and Caicos join Canada is nearly 100 years old, as it was originally in 1917 that Prime Minister Robert Borden initially mused about this possibility. The idea lay dormant for many years, as a bill was only introduced in 1974 to unite these two countries. Unfortunately, this private member's bill did not pass the House of Commons at that time. The issue was breached again in 1988 as officials of the Turks and Caicos Islands



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

took the initiative to approach the Canadian government in regards to establishing a special relationship between the two nations. At this point in time 90 percent of the Turks and Caicos population was in favour of a union with Canada. However, the prospect to unite the two countries failed in 1988 due to poor timing as the debate over free-trade with the United States started to heat up and consume the nation's political attention.

With Canada coming close to closing this un-



ion on several occasions, I decided to formally take up the mantle and renew this possibility. In 2003, I put forth a Motion in the House of Commons to craft a union between the two countries. In late 2003 I joined with Brad Sigouin and Richard Pearson to work with the Ottawa group "A Place in the Sun" to once again promote the association concept. I then flew to the Islands to explore directly their interest, holding meetings with British Governor Jim Poston, Premier Michael Misick, and Ralph Higgs the Director of the Turks and Caicos Tourism Board. There is a lot of merit to be found in the idea of this union, as it presents many favorable outcomes for both the Turks and Caicos Islands as well as for our great nation of Canada.

When many Canadians consider the possibility of having the Turks and Caicos as a part of Canada, their eyes light up at the potential of having easy access to pristine beaches and crystal clear water. For most Canadians, this is selling point enough as no further argument needs to be made. After all, Canadians holiday to the South far more than the East and West, so having a Canadian Southern holiday destination could be beneficial for Canadian unity. For a smaller percentage of Canadians, having access to a warm climate is nice, but not a big enough advantage to go through the process of forming a union.

However, there is a much deeper draw to being connected with Turks and Caicos, as it provides a highly advantageous situation for both nations involved. For many years I have been promoting the business concept of the Turks and Caicos becoming a platform for Canadian economic engagement.

In 2010 Mr. Brant Hasanen and the Kamloops, British Columbia, Chamber of Commerce did a preliminary study examining the

economic impact of closer integration between the Turks and Caicos Islands and Canada. The report estimates a \$9 billion benefit to Canada's economy.

The most important benefit that this union would bring to Canada is the sheer economic impact it would have due to the greater access it would afford us to the Latin and South American regions. The Turks

and Caicos Islands are strategically located at the doorway to the Caribbean and beyond. As a consistently stable British territorial country it has the inherent stability required of a platform partnership location.

Regionally, the Turks and Caicos participates 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. The islands' participation as a Canadian province in CARICOM would pro-



Canadian-owned Scotiabank is already located on the Turks and Caicos Islands, a sign of the economic grassroots foundation which Canada and the Turks and Caicos Islands already share.



vide 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 seven percent of the countries in the region, they represent a growing population of over 14 million people, and a US\$46 billion economy.

The Caribbean Rim of countries offers a much larger population of some 100 million. In addition with Cuba emerging more Western leaning and an excellent relationship with Canada it poses immense potential for Canadian economic investment.

With the economic reasoning aside, uniting with the Turks and Caicos Islands would give Canada a new base to operate out of for relief and military purposes. While Canadian peacekeeping expertise is called for in the Caribbean, the home base of any operation is extremely remote. If the Turks and Caicos were Canada's 11th province, Canada would be in a position to more readily offer assistance. We must be aware that when Canadian troops were sent to Haiti they staged from the Turks and Caicos.

In addition, with the volatile weather conditions in the Caribbean it certainly would benefit by having a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) emergency unit on the Islands.

These are just several highlights from a long

list of benefits Canada would reap from this union, which also include a Caribbean port for Canada's naval training exercises, a port for Canada Steamship Line to be registered and paying taxes in Canada, and a year-round Summer Olympic Training Centre.

On the other side of the coin, the Turks and Caicos Islands would see many positives as well. There are currently significant infrastructure needs that remain to be met in order for

the Islanders to advance economically. It must be appreciated that less than 10% of the island chain has been fully developed at present. The cost of linking the primary islands (Providential, North Caicos, Middle Caicos, East Caicos and South Caicos) by a system of inter-island causeways still remains beyond the Islands' current economic means although the cost is marginal by Canadian

standards. Such a project would greatly aid the development of the sparsely settled North, Middle and South Islands and would foster economic growth. 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.

With deep-water shipping ports and causeway development, the central islands could be considered for agriculture, tourism and



Helping the Islands to develop a deepwater port would benefit Canada by producing a platform for regional distribution and trade.

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.

As well, with the Islands having access to Canada in areas such as post-secondary education, it will help address the need for greatly increased training for expanded economic and employment opportunities in a diversified Turks and Caicos marketplace.

It must be noted that by myself and others raising the prospect of being linked with Canada it has positively impacted the Islands, as international attention has brought much goodwill, attention and reportedly some \$20 million free

advertising to the nation.

Exciting possibilities for both Canada and the Turks and Caicos Islands exist with a greatly increased cooperative association. Overall, having a closer association with the Caribbean, specifically the Turks and Caicos Islands, could only enhance trade, cultural, humanitarian and security interests for all concerned.

UPDATE: On October 15, 2012, the new Constitution of the Turks and Caicos Islands came into force. The new constitution, which was a joint product of the UK and the Turks and Caicos, marks the beginning of the end of the United Kingdom-led Interim Administration and the countdown to elections in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

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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 Have you ever visited or vacationed in The Turks and Caicos Islands?

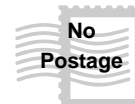
Yes No

Question #2 Do you believe that Canada and the Turks and Caicos should forge a special economic relationship?

Yes No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
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