

The Turks and Caicos Islands



MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

Much discussion has been held over the years about Canada and The Turks and Caicos Islands developing closer economic and political ties. Member of Parliament Peter Goldring has been promoting such dialogue for a number of years and explains why consideration is still currently appropriate.

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. This encouraging conclusion is certainly worthy of follow-up.

Closer ties with Canada could become an issue in the upcoming election in The Turks and Caicos Islands, which are expected to be held in 2012 if the Islands current positive progress is continued. (Self-rule in the British Overseas Territory was suspended in 2009 due to allegations of widespread corruption.)

In June 2009 Liberal Member of Parliament Massimo Pacetti, after consulting with Conservative Member of Parliament Peter Goldring, introduced this motion in the House of Commons, which Mr. Goldring seconded:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should immediately mandate two (2) Members of Parliament, one (1) from the governing party and one (1) from the official opposition party, to begin discussions with representatives of The Turks and Caicos Islands in establishing a framework in order to determine areas of enhanced partnership in trade, social and economic development.

Mr. Pacetti introduced his motion because of renewed interest in both Canada and The Turks and Caicos Islands in both Canada and the Islands. At the request of the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Goldring facilitated an informal meeting between then Turks and Caicos Islands Premier Galmo Williams and Prime Minister

Stephen Harper when the Prime Minister was attending the Summit of the Americas held in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009.



Peter Goldring, Member of Parliament for Edmonton East is promoting close social & economic ties with the Caribbean group of nations.



Mr. Goldring has long had considerable interest in the Caribbean, The Turks and Caicos Islands and their relationship to Canada, even before being appointed as the Opposition Foreign Affairs Critic (Caribbean Region) during the 38th Parliamentary Session in 2004. He has travelled extensively in the Caribbean region and visited some 12 countries.

In government he has had an advocacy role with respect to the Caribbean region and is serving on the Parliamentary Friendship Groups' for Canada-Cuba as Director and Canada-Caribbean as Vice-Chair, and has served on the Canada-Mexico and Canada-Haiti Committees. He has also been a member of the Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee in the House of Commons and has monitored elections in the region, specifically in Haiti and Guyana.

In the summer of 2005, using his own funds, he travelled to Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia and Dominica to see first-hand the effects of Hurricane Ivan and reported to Parliament. He also took the time to meet with political and business people about the evolving geopolitical and economic climate of the region. He first travelled to The Turks and Caicos Islands in 2003, again using his own funds, to gauge public opinion of the islands' prospects, touring both Provo Island and Grand Turks Island.

Discussion of a partnership union or formalized association between Canada and The Turks and Caicos Islands began in 1917 with Prime Minister Robert Borden, was noted and then shelved, as was a similar initiative made by Britain that Canada help with the governance of all British colonies in the Caribbean (then called the British West Indies).

In more recent years, movement for a Canada-Turks and Caicos partnership or union was en-

couraged in 1974 by then New Democratic Party Member of Parliament, Max Saltzman, a rather ironic name given the island's historical industry. The Turks and Caicos Islands was a significant source of supply of very necessary salt for Canada's Atlantic fishing industry, obtained by water evaporation in substantial salt works. The Turks and Caicos Islands coinage depicts Dutch style windmills

used to pump seawater for its historically most important industry, salt panning. The islands of course had moved on from the salt panning industry and were looking for the economic development and tourism that association with Canada might have brought. The Trudeau Government of the day, however, rejected Mr. Saltzman's proposal.

In April 1986 The Turks and Caicos Islands once again approached the Canadian government. A five member Progressive Conservative Committee formed by Winnipeg MP Dan



Brad Sigoun, MP Peter Goldring Edmonton East, MP Massimo Pacetti, Saint Leonard-Saint-Michael with Rosemarie Wilson, of The Turks & Caicos Islands Tourist Board.



McKenzie and chaired by Ottawa West MP, David Daubney, established plans to hold hearings on the issue before reporting to the party caucus. The hearings were to determine whether to hold further exploratory talks with the islanders and representatives of the semi-autonomous British Colony. Mr. Ralph Higgs and Mr. Delton Jones were the primary persons traveling to Ottawa from The Turks and Caicos Islands to state their case and addressed the Progressive Conservative sub-committee on external affairs. In the end, Canada opted not to pursue union with The Turks and Caicos Islands.

In late 2003 Mr. Goldring joined with businessmen Brad Sigouin and Richard Pearson of "A Place In The Sun" in once again promoting the association concept.

What Mr. Goldring advocates is an economic partnership, of one form or another, being negotiated between Canada and The Turks and Caicos Islands. Most certainly he does not advocate for the annexation of the islands by Canada, as this term is associated with colonialism, implying the "taking control of land or territory by sometimes forceful means, without the peoples' consent or agreement." The economic partnership could involve partnering with the islands by establishing a free trade association with them, or perhaps establishing some sort of customs union. Mr. Goldring does not advocate political union unless there is a clear and determined

majority will by both countries' citizens at some time in the distant future for such a political association.

He believes a Canada-Turks and Caicos Islands economic partnership or union represents an historic opportunity for Canada to have a new and positive influence in the greater Caribbean region. Partnership with The Turks and Caicos Islands would better formalize the "special relationship" Canada already

enjoys in the region and provide many mutually beneficial opportunities for both sides - going far beyond Canadians merely having access to a tropical vacation destination. The Turks and Caicos Islands, specifically South Caicos Island, has the possible potential to be the principal deep-water transshipment centre for Canadian trade coming both to and from the entire Caribbean Rim region and beyond.



Ralph Higgs, Director of The Turks & Caicos Islands Tourist Board, met with Peter Goldring in January 2007 to discuss opportunities for joint ventures.

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With a Canadian platform of trade transshipment from a deep-water port on Turks and Caicos' South Caicos Island, Canada from its Atlantic ports would benefit greatly by a partnership and engagement. 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. It is about 200 kilometres off shore from Haiti and a somewhat similar distance

from Cuba.

Canada has in the past staged its troop deployment to Haiti from The Turks and Caicos Islands. One could only imagine the great opportunities to directly engage the emerging Cuban economic interests from such a regional base of operations. In addition to much greater trade and economic development in the region, the platform would also serve as a regional base for democratic development efforts as well as disaster assistance. The hurricane that devastated Grenada, Haiti and other islands underscores the need for regionally locating disaster assistance. From a very understandable, practical reason, if Canada is much more engaged economically and politically in the region it has

greater capacity for emergency relief as well.

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

Canada's future in the Caribbean should be one of enhanced political, economic, and humanitarian relationships. A Canadian platform of distribution and engagement in the Caribbean would help pursue this goal, in anticipation of an increased interaction with our trade partners.

Update: Canada's future in the Caribbean should be one of enhanced political, economic, and humanitarian relationships. A Canadian platform of distribution and engagement in the Caribbean would help pursue this goal.

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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...

Do you believe that Canada can do more to encourage the trade of Canadian made goods and products in the Caribbean and South America?

Yes No

Do you think that Canada and the Turks and Caicos Islands should explore improved political, economic and humanitarian regional cooperation?

Yes No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
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