

## **Canada, Cuba, and CARICOM: An Evolving Relationship in Hemispheric Cooperation and Integration in the 1990s**

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### **Abstract**

This paper will discuss the nature of Canada's relationship with Cuba and CARICOM (Commonwealth Caribbean) during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will argue that while Canada has not fully endorsed all aspects of Castro's rule it has not isolated Cuba as the US has done. Rather it has pursued a policy of "constructive engagement" towards this Caribbean island nation since the early 1990s as the best option to reintegrate Cuba into the politics and economics of the hemisphere. The paper will make the case that notwithstanding the differences that have arisen to date between both countries, "constructive engagement" remains the best viable option for Canada as it attempts to influence the rise of democratic institutions in Cuba and its eventual entry into the family of democratic nations in the Americas.

The other aspect of this paper discusses the nature of Canada's relationship with CARICOM. Since Canada's entry into the OAS in 1989 a strong Canada-CARICOM axis has given rise to a new agenda in bilateral cooperation which includes such topics as promoting democratic governance in the hemisphere, strengthening civil society, human security, the environment, sustainable development and peace-keeping among others. This paper will examine the role of this agenda in nurturing a common Canada-CARICOM approach towards incorporating Cuba into the affairs of the hemisphere in the 1990s.

Canada in the last decade of the 20th Century became a significant player in the affairs of the Americas. This was particularly so with respect to Cuba and the Commonwealth Caribbean (CARICOM)—both sub regions of the Greater Caribbean. There is no doubt that Canada has historically engaged Cuba and the CARICOM region on a wide variety of fronts prior to the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Developmental aid, trade and commercial relations stand out as pre-eminent. Canada had also, prior to this time, quietly participated under the auspices of the OAS in a range of inter- American activities. By the early 1970s, Canada had joined the Caribbean Development Bank, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies. In addition, Canada had

participated in a wide range of inter-American Conferences which dealt with such issues as health, migration, tourism, education, labour and trade unions, industrial development and transportation. This was largely the product of the review of Canadian foreign policy conducted during the early Trudeau years that produced a significant publication in 1970: *Foreign Policy for Canadians: Latin America*.<sup>2</sup> This document became the basis for discussion of future Canada-Latin American relations and Canada's subsequent membership in the OAS. Yet, it was not until 1989 that Canada joined the OAS. Once this decision was taken by Ottawa, however, Canada's profile in hemispheric affairs heightened considerably to the point where it has now become a major player in the development and execution of a hemispheric agenda designed to deal with some of the pressing problems in the Americas.

One such problem was how best to incorporate Cuba into the economy of the Americas following the dismantling of the former Soviet Union. Canada's role in this regard has been substantial. The other problem related to the CARICOM. Given the vulnerability of CARICOM society to the illicit drug trade, the trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the global changes of the late 1980s and 1990s in trade, commerce, technology, communications and culture, how could Canada help these small island nation states? In fact, it was in response to these problems that Canada re-ordered and recast its policy towards this region in the last decade; so much so that a unique partnership is political cooperation in the Americas developed between Canada and CARICOM states in the 1990s. While maintaining its strong emphasis on trade and commercial issues as important in the bilateral relationship as reflected in the 1986 CARIBCAN agreement, Canada also began to apply equal weight to other areas of hemispheric importance.<sup>3</sup> These included: the strengthening of civil society, promoting democratic governance, and supporting economic and social development. By the end of the 1990s, the agenda had expanded to include cooperation in neo-liberal economic reform, including privatization, deregulation, trade liberalization, modernization, sustainable development, human security, enhanced peacekeeping (in the Americas), and anti-drug trafficking assistance.<sup>4</sup> Both partners also worked to establish democracy and hemispheric security and expended considerable energies in conflict management and conflict resolution as was evident in Haiti. Indeed, since Canada's entry into the OAS in 1989, a Canada-CARICOM axis has evolved that brought its democratic influence, tradition and perspective to bear on the deliberations of the OAS to the point where both have played important roles in establishing and introducing democratic values in the 1990s in the Americas.

In short order, Canada's role as a constructive participant in hemispheric affairs, was certainly reflected in its foreign policy orientation towards Cuba and CARICOM in the 1990s. It was a remarkable display of political cooperation designed to achieve a level of hemispheric cooperation and integration. This is the central focus of this paper. It will, in the first instance, address Canada-Cuba relations in the 1990s and thereafter examine Canada-CARICOM relations in the same period to demonstrate not only the level of hemispheric cooperation which were achieved by these actors in this critical decade, but the salient issues which brought them together in the context of external adversity.

### **Canada-Cuba Relations**

Canada's relations with Cuba in the 1990s centred on the critical issue of how to incorporate the Caribbean-island nation into the economy and mainstream of hemispheric life of the Americas. This had become urgent as a result of the economic predicament in Cuba resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Despite US pressure and opposition, Canada stood its ground and continued to pursue its policy of diplomatic recognition of Cuba—a policy which Canada had maintained since 1959—from the era of John Diefenbaker to the present.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the US, which has been intolerant of ideological pluralism in the hemisphere, Canada has been more accepting of ideological diversity; and even though Ottawa has not always sanctioned or endorsed all aspects of Castro's rule, especially in the human rights area, it has refused to isolate Cuba as the US has done. If anything, Canada has been vocal in its denunciation of human rights abuses and Castro's intolerance of political dissent. Yet, because of its policy of engagement since the 1960s, Canada was able through the process of continuity, to introduce a policy of humane internationalism in the decade of the 1990s towards Cuba by pleading for a new, compassionate and sympathetic outlook by hemispheric nations towards a Cuba then on the brink of social and economic collapse. This approach has certainly characterized Canada's outlook to Cuba during the last decade.

The policies of both Conservative and Liberal administrations in Canada have been consistent in this regard. In the early 1990s, it was Brian Mulroney's Conservative administration that took the first in a series of initiatives to reintegrate Cuba into the hemispheric fold. It was Mulroney who took Canada into the OAS in 1989, thereby legitimizing its voice in the multilateral forum where Latin American issues are of the foremost importance.<sup>6</sup> It was his Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clarke, and Clarke's successor, Barbara McDougall, who in the early 1990s called for the re-entry of Cuba "into the Family of hemispheric nations".<sup>7</sup> This position was subsequently endorsed by

the Liberals. In fact, from 1990 onwards, Canada, under both the Conservative and the Liberal administrations, has been forthright in denouncing the continuation of the longstanding US embargo, the Mack Amendment (1989) and the Cuban Democracy Act (1992) at the United Nations (UN). Indeed, Canada has in the last decade made it an annual ritual to condemn the embargo at the UN.

Canada has also provided development aid to Havana to avert social tension in the island nation, and in 1996 called upon the US to follow suit.<sup>8</sup> This was a clear manifestation of the humane internationalism that has become a vital ingredient of Canada's foreign policy in the hemisphere and which has shaped the Chrétien administration, and now Prime Minister Paul Martin's approach to Cuba.

By the mid-1990s, Canada's official policy towards Cuba was clear. Cuba was no longer a security threat to anyone. The Cold War was over, and with it, the security and ideological threat that Cuba had formerly posed. In this context, Canada constantly argued that Cuba should be reintegrated into the world community and multilateral assistance should be provided to revive its ailing economy. Canada was prepared to play a leading role in this regard by establishing a formal "government –to-government bilateral aid program which amounted to some \$30 million over a five year period."<sup>9</sup> This made Canada one of the largest donor countries in Cuba in the 1990s.

Like the Mulroney administration, the Liberal government of Chrétien committed itself, once in office, to enhance official bilateral relations. Official backing was given to the Canadian private sector already investing in Cuba. Many Canadian companies invested heavily in Cuba in the 1990s especially in the mining, tourism, and service sectors. Such companies included Ian Delaney's Alberta-based Sheritt International with holdings in nickel and cobalt; Wilton Properties Ltd., headed by Vancouver entrepreneur Wally Berukoff, with substantial holdings in the hotel industry; and Miramar Mining Corp., Holmer Gold Mines Ltd., and Carib Gold Resources Inc., all in joint venture projects with Cuban companies to explore for gold. Likewise, Canada Northwest Energy, a subsidiary of Sheritt, and the Calgary-based Bow Valley Energy Inc. have been involved in oil exploration. Similarly the Delta Hotel chain which manages several hotels in eastern Cuba is also engaged in hotel construction. These represent but a few in an ever-increasing Canadian private sector presence in Cuba. It is not surprising that Canada had become one of Cuba's biggest trade and investment partners in the decade of the 1990s, and continues in this vein today.<sup>10</sup>

For its part, the Liberal government took its own initiatives to enhance bilateral relations. These included senior-level contacts, beginning with the 1995 visit to Cuba of Christine Stewart, Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa. Cuba's Foreign Minister, Roberto Robaina, reciprocated in 1995 only to be followed during the same year by the Cuban Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Co-operation, the President of the Cuban National Assembly, and the President of the National Bank of Cuba. In all cases discussions centred upon economic and commercial co-operation and investment opportunities in Cuba. Other Canadian initiatives included strong support for parliamentary exchanges and encouragement for the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Oxfam-Canada, CUSO, the Anglican and United Churches, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Ottawa-Cuba Connection, the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, and Carleton University of Canada.<sup>11</sup>

At the multilateral level as well, Canada spoke out in favour of a new hemispheric outlook toward Cuba. In December 1994 for instance, at the Summit for the Americas in Miami, Chrétien was openly critical of the US position on Cuba. He asserted that the best way to cultivate democracy in Cuba was through constructive engagement rather than isolation.<sup>12</sup> This position was repeated at both the June 1995 and June 1996 meetings of the General Assembly of the OAS held in Haiti and Panama respectively. On both occasions Canada's position of constructive engagement was reiterated when Secretary of State Stewart emphasized that "political and economic advances can only be encouraged by maintaining a dialogue with the Cuban people and the government." While acknowledging that much work was still outstanding in Cuba in the areas of democratic development and human rights, Stewart called upon member states of the OAS "to examine ways of opening up a similar dialogue with Cuba." So adamant was Canada's position that even when world opinion turned against Cuba following the downing by the Cuban Air Force of two civilian aircrafts in February 1996, Canada remained unconvinced about ostracizing Cuba. Isolation, Stewart countered, would not "prevent such tragedies; indeed, they only give rise to the hardening of militant policies and reinforcing the wrong kind of nationalism and political rigidity."<sup>13</sup>

When President Clinton signed the Helms-Burton Bill into law in March 1996 amidst domestic pressure following the shooting of the two civilian aircrafts by the Cubans, Canada, which considered the legislation an intrusion upon its sovereignty, joined an international campaign against it. Canada has maintained that the legal provisions of the Act violate international law and unlawfully imposes domestic US legislation extraterritorially on non-US citizens

and companies. Most important, the Act establishes a dangerous precedent for US foreign policy in the hemisphere by imposing, unilaterally, US action to force other countries to comply with American wishes. Canada also opposed the Act as a violation of the principles governing international trade and a direct attack against a number of the provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In essence, Helms-Burton constitutes a violation of the principles governing international co-existence, weakens the process of multilateralism and is contrary to the spirit of international cooperation.

Likewise, Canada condemned the objective of Helms-Burton to starve Cuba of hard currency by dissuading foreign investment in the island-nation. This, in Canada's view, would only exacerbate the suffering of the Cuban people. Hence, the Act was seen as morally unjust, politically unsound and consequently unacceptable. Canada also refused to accept the US argument that Helms-Burton had the potential of forcing Castro out of office through public disenchantment with a collapsing economy. If anything, that policy mind-set has strengthened Castro's grip on power. Indeed, by mid-1996, Canada had not only spoken out forcefully against Helms-Burton, but had built a coalition of forces with its allies in the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU) and the G-7 to oppose it.

What is clear is that by the end of 1996, neither the Helms-Burton Law nor US diplomatic pressure had derailed Canada from its policy of engagement. With the backing of the Canadian public, Lloyd Axworthy, the new Minister of External Affairs, stayed the course. With a personal interest in the Cuban file, he proceeded to explore ways and means of accelerating political liberalization in Cuba within the context of constructive engagement. The principal issue of concern to him was human rights. In January 1997, Axworthy made his historic visit to Cuba – the first such visit by a senior cabinet member since former Prime Minister Trudeau's visit in 1976. Axworthy met with Castro, Robaina and senior Cuban officials. The eventual result was the historic signing of a 14-point Canada-Cuba Joint Declaration on bilateral cooperation and consultation on human rights, economic reform in Cuba, the prevention of international terrorism, food aid to Cuba and the exploration of joint research and development projects in the health and environment sectors. It represented the cornerstone of Canada-Cuba cooperation for the rest of the decade.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, soft diplomacy had its weaknesses. In an attempt to complement the accomplishment of the Pope who was able to have the Castro regime release some 299 prisoners during his historic visit to Cuba in January 1998,

Chrétien visited Cuba in April 1998 to demand the release of four political prisoners as an act to enhance his international political profile and to demonstrate the power of constructive engagement. This trip was a failure and henceforth marked the slow deterioration in Canada-Cuba relations. Axworthy's visit in January 1999 failed to halt this trend when Castro refused the Canadian request that the four dissidents be tried in an open court.<sup>15</sup> It was clear that Castro refused to bend in the face of pressure tactics. To expect him to do so, as Chrétien tried, was a gross miscalculation of the man and history of his regime. What Chrétien failed to appreciate is that Castro "is unlikely to implement reforms in the face of pressure tactics, as ten US presidents have witnessed personally."<sup>16</sup> As John Kirk later quipped, Chrétien's expectation was "foolishly optimistic and naïve."<sup>17</sup>

In the meantime, critics at home were outspoken, and as pressure mounted, in an act of political gainmanship, the Liberal Government agreed to undertake a review of Canada-Cuba relations.

The review did not challenge the tenets of constructive engagement, nor did it challenge engagement with Cuba. Economic sanctions were definitely not considered, but many bilateral programs were frozen until Castro showed signs of moving human rights issues forward. The review concluded that Canada, a major supporter of Cuba's re-entry into the OAS, would no longer pursue that subject. In fact, Canada even refrained from endorsing Cuba's invitation to the OAS Summit in Quebec City in April 2001.<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding the human rights aberration, tremendous goodwill still existed between both countries by the end of 1999. Constructive engagement continues as the cornerstone of Canada's policy toward Cuba, and there is far more on which both countries agree than disagree. Since the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba, Canada has displayed an element of unnecessary impatience in trying to push for quick change in the human rights sector in Cuba hoping to win political kudos at home and abroad for its policy of constructive engagement. The rush to push Castro failed. Canada's recent thrust and style were not only uncharacteristic, but certainly not in conformity with constructive engagement. It is contrary to what Canadians themselves have been saying, "that change in Cuba is not going to happen overnight."<sup>19</sup> It is also contrary to Christine Stewart's view articulated a few years earlier – that such an approach could only reinforce "the wrong kind of nationalism and political rigidity" in Cuba.<sup>20</sup> Certainly the circumstances and dynamics that have produced the debate over human rights do not justify putting foreign aid assistance to Cuba on hold or isolating it from multilateral hemispheric discussions. This

policy must be reviewed. Canada's liberal and progressive outlook, as well as its diplomatic culture of compromise and understanding for which it has become well known, must not be jeopardized. Indeed, as Ottawa's policy to Cuba over the last decade has shown in the realm of political cooperation and hemispheric integration, Canada is well placed among nations of the world to influence the direction which Cuba takes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Canada-CARICOM Relations:**

The other sub-region within the Greater Caribbean where Canada showed great interest and commitment to development in the decade of the 1990s was the Commonwealth Caribbean. With respect to CARICOM, Canada's interest in the region has been longstanding. It dates back to the 18th century when British North America traded fish, lumber and other staples for West Indian rum and molasses. This commercial relationship strengthened after the American Revolution and became the foundation upon which Canada-Caribbean relations were based. Between the late 18th century and the 1960s commercial relations, preferential trade access and Canadian investment in the Caribbean constituted the main subjects in the Canadian-Caribbean bilateral agenda.<sup>21</sup> By the early 1970s when bilateral flow of goods and services between both partners declined, the Caribbean region was in the midst of a serious economic recession. Mounting unemployment, shortage of capital and investment, low levels of economic activity and the impact of the international oil crisis of the 1970s – all made the Caribbean vulnerable to instability. So too did the drug trade which had begun to penetrate Caribbean life. In addition, Jamaica and Grenada's ideological flirtation with Cuba, and Forbes Burnham's leftist government in Guyana were all matters of concern to Canada. This was exacerbated by the influx of CARICOM citizens into Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. These developments forced Canada to view the region with some urgency, particularly since the European Economic Community (EEC) and the United States had already made commitments to do likewise.<sup>22</sup>

A review of Canadian policy towards CARICOM took place in Jamaica in 1979 under the auspices of the 1979 Joint Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (JTEC) and made public in 1981 by Mark McGuigan, Canada's Secretary of State for External Relations. While this review gave high priority to trade issues—and led to the non-reciprocal trade agreement, CARIBCAN—pronouncements were made on other subjects as well. These included balance of payments support to CARICOM states that had concluded remedial programmes with the International Monetary Fund (IMF); technical assistance to the region; assistance in industrial development planning; and training for

CARICOM's military, coast guard and police personnel. Other topics were quickly added to McGuigan's list, including: human resource development, immigration, institutional support programmes, drug trafficking, regional security, trade liberalization, globalization, environment, debt and debt related issues, and democracy and human rights. Several regional projects also surfaced targeting specific areas of need such as institutional support for the University of the West Indies (UWI), the CARICOM Airports Maintenance Project, the Caribbean Maritime Training Assistance Programme (CMTAP) and the Canada Training Awards Programme (CTAP). Canada's development aid programme also facilitated the construction of basic Caribbean infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, harbours, bridges, university expansion and agricultural research.<sup>23</sup> Canada's primary objective was to work closely with CARICOM in an attempt to maintain economic, social, and political stability in the region.

Substantial Canadian financial aid also found its way to CARICOM states through multilateral agencies. Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) was provided through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and several NGOs. Likewise, the Canada Fund, initially referred to as the Mission Administered Fund (MAF), administered directly by Canadian High Commissions in the Caribbean, complemented CIDA's bilateral programmes through the provision of technical, educational and social development assistance.

While trade, investment and support for infra-structural development were seen as important for prosperity in the Canada-CARICOM relationship in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ottawa readily conceded in its 1994 foreign policy review that economic gains could not be sustained outside a framework of social justice and political stability. In that sense, 1994 marked a significant departure in Canada's policy towards the Caribbean. The emphasis was no longer placed exclusively on commercial relations, but other areas came up for attention. These included: the strengthening of civil society, promoting democratic governance, and supporting economic and social development. By the end of the 1990s, this agenda expanded to include neo-liberal economic reforms such as: privatization, deregulation, trade liberalization, widened market access, sustainable development, enhanced peacekeeping, and anti-drug trafficking assistance.<sup>24</sup>

The implementation of this agenda necessitated closer Canada-CARICOM cooperation. This was largely facilitated by the shared and common value-based priorities of both parties. Their common institutional culture, democratic

values and Canada's favourable reputation as a non-colonial power with a distinguished record of multilateralism, helped to make the implementation of this agenda easier. Consequently, such issues as human security, good governance, democratization, the role of women in development, the environment, sustainable development, and a rules-based trading system not only took prominence in the 1990s but found fertile ground in Canada-CARICOM cooperative endeavours. They spoke in unison on these issues at joint bilateral sessions especially in the JTEC, the United Nations (UN), the OAS, and the Commonwealth.

A unique partnership in political cooperation in the Americas emerged between Canada and CARICOM states in the 1990s. Since Canada's 1989 entry into the OAS, a Canada-CARICOM axis has evolved that brought its democratic influence, tradition and perspective to bear on the deliberations of the OAS. This has been particularly so in the implementation of aspects of the Canada-CARICOM agenda of the 1990s. Both partners, for instance, worked to establish democracy and hemispheric security. Considerable energies were also spent in conflict management and conflict resolution. Nowhere was this more evident in the context of the Caribbean than in Haiti. Here, both Canada and CARICOM played major roles in establishing democracy and introducing democratic values in the 1990s. Both provided peacekeeping forces during the political crisis of the decade, granted financial assistance and technical expertise to facilitate growth of a reliable and organized infrastructure for democratic elections, and worked together to monitor political and economic developments in Haiti. As late as 1999, Canada provided \$1.5 million to support Haiti's legislative assembly elections then due in May 2000, and provided CARICOM with \$100,000 to assist in monitoring these elections.

Canada-CARICOM's political cooperation was also reflected in the support which CARICOM states gave to Ottawa's Landmines Convention, and the mutual support which both gave each other for initiatives and candidacies at the international level. The most important in this period was CARICOM's support for Canada's unsuccessful UN Security Council seat. Similarly, notwithstanding some minor differences, both have been working together to reintegrate Cuba into the hemispheric family of nations despite strong opposition from the US. Canada and CARICOM also worked closely in the 1990s to advance, through the Treaty of Rome, the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as part of its joint international political agenda. Trinidad and Tobago led that campaign in the Caribbean. It was an active member of the ICC process eventually serving as a member of the Like-Minded Group and was the first among CARICOM states to ratify the ICC Statute on April 6,

1999. Since then, at the urgings of Canada and Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Haiti, and Saint Lucia have signed the Statute though some have still to ratify it.<sup>25</sup>

Further political cooperation was reflected in the support which Caribbean states gave to the Canadian initiative on human security. While the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines and the Rome Treaty creating the ICC were essentially part of the human security agenda, a new emphasis was now placed by Canada in preserving and protecting people's rights and their safety from conflict and violence. As Canada's Secretary of State for External Relations, Lloyd Axworthy explained: "The changing nature of violent conflict and intensifying globalization have increasingly put people at the centre of world affairs. As a result, the safety of the individual – that is human security – has become both a measure of global security and a new impetus for global action."<sup>26</sup> From a Canadian perspective, the human security agenda places people as its central point of reference rather than focussing exclusively on the security of territory or governments. It was the explanation of this agenda described as "soft power" in action, which formed a substantial part of Axworthy's speech at the OAS General Assembly in March 1998, and which met with the ready support of CARICOM states.

In this context, useful discussions on several issues pertaining to the agenda took place between Canada and CARICOM during the final years of the 1990s. These included the illicit drug trade, the trafficking in small arms and light weapons, the condition of war affected children, the promotion of human rights, and peacebuilding. With respect to the illicit drug trade in particular, both partners agreed that 'hard power' alone (that is economic and military power) was not enough to solve this "intractable and globalized problem." Both recognized the participation of non-state actors as central in this regard. Inter-governmental partnership and the support of the NGOs and multilateral drug bodies were therefore necessary. In May 1996, Canada, CARICOM, the US and the European Union (EU) met in Barbados to discuss the drug trade and its corrupting influence on good governance. Ottawa took a particular interest in this conference because 40 per cent of the drugs that enter Canada come through trans-shipment points in the Caribbean. It is not surprising therefore, that CARICOM and Canada endorsed the Barbados Plan of Action, a comprehensive anti-drug strategy which is coordinated by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). In the late 1990s, Canada also provided substantial assistance to CARICOM's anti-drug campaign through the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and through the long-standing bilateral assistance training programmes of

the Department of National Defence, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Revenue Canada. In January 1999, Canada's Foreign Minister Axworthy visited Jamaica to promote his Hemispheric Dialogue in Drugs, and in June actively participated in the OAS Foreign Ministers' Dialogue on Drugs in Guatemala.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, constitutional governance has been a subject which Canada and CARICOM have also addressed. Both partners, from a peacebuilding perspective have been heavily committed to civilian rule, democratic values, tolerance, respect for human rights and stable political institutions. In this regard, Canada-CARICOM cooperation has generated bilateral dialogues on a host of topics including: human rights in Cuba, Haiti, and Guyana; women's rights; minority rights; and the rights of the disabled. CARICOM has also supported Canada's call for a revamping of the Inter-American human rights system and the promotion within the Americas of national human rights institutions such as human rights commissions and ombudsman offices. So too, was Canada's call for a Parliamentary Network of the Americas, making the OAS Justice Studies Centre for the Americas a vehicle for developing a coherent, functioning and fair justice system in the hemisphere, and the establishment of "white helmet" missions to undertake peace building efforts in the Americas.<sup>28</sup>

Canada was also a relevant factor and an understanding friend to CARICOM states in the 1990s as the latter prepared to deal with the process of international trade liberalization. The Caribbean was preoccupied in the last decade with the gradual disappearance of trade preferences and was actively involved during this time in the negotiation of the Lome Convention, the negotiation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and preparations for the WTO round. In all these forums, the Caribbean argued that as small countries they were more vulnerable to the challenges of trade liberalization and that such vulnerability should be factored into the making of international trade rules. Of particular importance, in this regard, was that in most countries, public revenues were generated by the imposition of tariffs on imports. The lowering of these tariffs resulting from trade liberalization would have a major impact, economically and socially, on their countries.

Canada remained sympathetic to these concerns. While a strong advocate of trade liberalization, Ottawa acknowledged the challenges faced by CARICOM and other developing countries and committed itself to consider provisions in trade agreements for special and differential treatment for these countries.<sup>29</sup>

During the decade of the 1990s, Canada-CARICOM relations had entered a new and dynamic era. This was reflected in the development of a new working agenda which had emerged in the period to deal with several regional and international problems. While trade and economic matters understandably remained central to this longstanding Canada-CARICOM relationship, judging from the importance attached by the latter to CARIBCAN, a host of other issues now surfaced which took centre stage in the relationship. Drug trafficking, trade liberalization, good governance, democracy and human rights, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, structural adjustment, and the environment were among the more prominent. It was obvious in the 1980s and 1990s that without international assistance, the fledgling Caribbean states would have found it difficult to cope in the face of these new problems. The region's fragile economy and inadequate resources made it equally vulnerable to these new developments. Canada, among others, came to the assistance of CARICOM.

Canada's international efforts in the region were facilitated in large measure by the reorientation of Canadian foreign policy towards the Commonwealth Caribbean in the late 1980s and 1990s. During this time, Canada placed considerable emphasis on the strengthening of civil society, promoting democratic governance, and supporting economic and social development in the region. A range of mechanisms were developed to transfer financial resources, provide debt-relief, supply technical assistance, promote political cooperation, and foster goodwill between both partners. Through these means, Canada was able to assist CARICOM states to navigate through the turbulence of the 1990s.

## **Conclusion**

There is little doubt that Canada became a dynamic, useful, and resourceful partner to Cuba and CARICOM in the last decade of the twentieth century. Its constructive involvement in the Greater Caribbean region at this time was both a manifestation and reflection of its changing role in the Americas. While it is true that Canada had not been an 'active' participant in the life of the hemisphere until the end of the Second World War, it was the decision taken in 1989 to join the OAS that heightened its profile in hemispheric affairs. It was the context in which Ottawa spoke out in support of Cuba's reintegration into the life of the Americas and provided meaningful and tangible help to the CARICOM states as they confronted the serious challenges of development, peace and democratic stability in the 1990s. The renewed and reinvigorated policy of Canada in the Greater Caribbean (in this instance Cuba and CARICOM) revealed that Ottawa had not only become a relevant voice in the larger life of

the hemisphere, but one whose support had become critical and valuable to the welfare of the less influential partners in the Americas.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See Gregory S. Mahler, "Foreign Policy and Canada's Evolving Relations with Caribbean Commonwealth Countries: Political and Economic Considerations" in Jerry Haar and Edgar Dosman (eds.) *A Dynamic Partnership: Canada's Changing Role in the Hemisphere* (London: Transaction Publishers; 1993), pp79–92; See also Stephen J. Randall, "Canada and Latin America: The Evolution of Institutional Ties" in *Ibid.* pp 27–44.
- <sup>2</sup> Randall, pp. 27–44.
- <sup>3</sup> CARIBCAN was a trade agreement aimed at enhancing the bilateral commercial relations between Canada and CARICOM states. See Sahadeo Basdeo, "CARIBCAN: A Continuum in Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean Economic Relations," *Canadian Foreign Policy*, Vol.1, No. 2, Spring 1993, pp. 55–79.
- <sup>4</sup> Jerry Haar and Anthony T. Bryan, "Towards a New Paradigm of Canadian-Caribbean Relations" in Jerry Haar and Anthony T. Bryan (eds.), *Canadian-Caribbean Relations in Transition: Trade, Sustainable Development and Security* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1999), p.232.
- <sup>5</sup> Randal, p.30
- <sup>6</sup> Peter McKenna, "How is Canada doing in the OAS?" *Canadian Foreign Policy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Spring 1993, p.81
- <sup>7</sup> Jim Rochlin, *Discovering the Americas: The Evolution of Canadian Foreign Policy Towards Latin America*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), p.119
- <sup>8</sup> *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 7, 1996
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Peter McKenna and John Kirk, "Canada, Cuba and Constructive Engagement in the 1990s" in Heather N. Nicol (ed.), *Canada, The US and Cuba: Helms-Burton and Its Aftermath* (Kingston: Centre for International Relations, Queen's University Press, 1999), p.59
- <sup>10</sup> Sahadeo Basdeo, "Helms-Burton Controversy: An Issue in Canada-US Foreign Relations" in Heather N. Nicol (ed.). *Canada, The US and Cuba: Helms-Burton and its Aftermath* (Kingston: Centre for International Relations, Queen's University Press, 1999), pp.15–16.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11
- <sup>12</sup> "Cuba's Absence at America's Summit Skirts Formal Agenda", *Cuba Info*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1996), p.3

- <sup>13</sup> Christine Stewart, “Keynote Address” in Wendy Drukier (ed.) *Helms-Burton and International Business: Legal and Commercial Implications* (Ottawa: FOCAL, 1996), p. 3 and 7
- <sup>14</sup> *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 24, 1997.
- <sup>15</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, January 8, 1999.
- <sup>16</sup> McKenna and Kirk, p. 70.
- <sup>17</sup> Cited in *Human Events*, July 30, 1999.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, June 29, 1999.
- <sup>19</sup> McKenna and Kirk, p. 70.
- <sup>20</sup> Stewart, p. 7.
- <sup>21</sup> S. Basdeo and H. Robertson, “The Nova Scotia-British West Indies Commercial Experiment in the Aftermath of the American Revolution, 1789–1802,” in *Dalhousie Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1, (Spring 1981), p.8.
- <sup>22</sup> Basdeo, “CARIBCAN: A Continuum in...,” p.159
- <sup>23</sup> M. McGuigan, Speech delivered at The Canada/CARICOM JTEC Meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, January 15, 1981.
- <sup>24</sup> Haar and Bryan, pp. 231–32.
- <sup>25</sup> “Some Notes on Canada-CARICOM Political Cooperation,” Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, March 8, 2000.
- <sup>26</sup> “Illicit Drugs in the Caribbean,” Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, March 8, 2000.
- <sup>27</sup> L. Axworthy, “Foreword” in *Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World*, (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999), p.1
- <sup>28</sup> L. Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, An Address to the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, Washington D.C., February 11, 2000.
- <sup>29</sup> Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Delegation to the Canada-CARICOM Heads of Government Summit, St. George’s, Grenada, March 3–5, 1996.

