



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Trade Knowledge Workshop and Bilateral Visit**

**Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
of the Americas (FIPA)**

**Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and
Bridgetown, Barbados
March 17 to 20, 2008**

Report

INTRODUCTION

A delegation of four Parliamentarians representing the Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) travelled to Trinidad and Tobago and to Barbados from March 17 to 20, 2008. The delegation was co-led by the Honourable Senator Michel Biron and Cheryl Gallant, M.P. Also participating were the Honourable Consiglio Di Nino, Senator, and Mr. Marcel Lussier, M.P. The Parliamentarians were assisted by Ms. Danielle Labonté, secretary to the delegation, and Mr. Michael Holden, analyst to the delegation.

The purpose of the delegation's visit to the Caribbean was to advance a number of strategic objectives for FIPA. Among them was to promote awareness about the Parliamentary Association in the region and to advocate for greater participation in FIPA by countries in the Caribbean, for example through the establishment of a Caribbean Section of FIPA. Included in this objective was the aim of identifying a possible host country in the Caribbean for FIPA's 6th Plenary Meeting. The delegation also sought to lobby for observer status for FIPA at the Organization of American States (OAS) and at the Summit of the Americas.

In addition, the Canadian Section participated with its Trinidadian and Tobagonian counterparts in a workshop on international trade policy, based on the successful model of the inaugural Trade Knowledge Workshop for Parliamentarians, hosted by Canada in March 2007 (for further details on the inaugural activity, see Appendix: *An Overview of FIPA's March 2007 Trade Knowledge Workshop: Results and Benefits for Parliamentarians*). Through workshops such as these, FIPA has made it a priority to help Parliamentarians from across the hemisphere to build their technical capacity in matters of international trade and trade policy. By participating in a bilateral workshop, the Canadian section hoped to advance that goal.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Canadian delegation visited Port-of-Spain for two days to attend meetings and participate in the Trade Knowledge Workshop. Its first official function was to attend the public inauguration ceremony of President George Maxwell Richards. This event marked the first time in Trinidad and Tobago's history that the President was sworn in to office in a public setting. John Mundy, Canada's Acting High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago accompanied the delegation.

The Trade Knowledge Workshop

The Trade Knowledge Workshop for Parliamentarians was hosted by Trinidad and Tobago's Office of Parliament, known as the Red House. Several speakers

welcomed the delegation, including the Honourable Senator Danny Montano, President of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Penelope Beckles, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley, Minister of Trade and Industry and the Honourable Stanford Callender, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister and Member of the Executive Committee of FIPA.

Speakers and Discussions

The Trade Knowledge Workshop was hosted and moderated by Johann Geiser from the Institute of International Relations at the University of the West Indies (UWI). Four experts in different areas of trade policy gave opening presentations, after which the participants were invited to make comments and ask questions of the presenters.

The first three speakers focused on the recently-concluded Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union and the CARIFORUM countries (the members of the Caribbean Community as well as the Dominican Republic). The final speaker, Mr. Philip Rourke, spoke more generally about the role of Parliamentarians in trade policy formation and implementation, and about the growing complexity of trade agreements and the challenges of engaging citizens in discussions about the contents of those agreements.

Dr. Anthony Gonzales, Associate Fellow at the UWI opened the session with a discussion entitled *Key Trade and Development Issues in the European Partnership Agreement (EPA)*. In his presentation, Dr. Gonzales reviewed the fact that the EPA was motivated by the need to replace the Caribbean's existing preferential trade agreements, based on the generalized system of preferences (GSP), which could violate multilateral trade rules. He also highlighted some of the key features of the EPA, including the fact that the deal is asymmetrical in that, under the agreement, the EU opens its markets more quickly than the CARIFORUM countries. He also discussed the implications of the EPA on regional economic integration in the Caribbean.

Dr. Gonzales concluded by highlighting a number of outstanding questions given the region's experience in EPA negotiations, specifically: whether or not the process was rushed; whether there were adequate consultations; and what the implications of this agreement could be on the institutional development of the Caribbean Community.

The second speaker was Mr. Ramesh Mahindra Ramdeen, Trade Development Specialist at the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association. Mr. Ramdeen's presentation was entitled *CARIFORUM Negotiating Experience with the European Union and the Prospects for Canada-CARICOM Free Trade Negotiations*.

Mr. Ramdeen began his presentation by pointing out the excellent timing of the Trade Knowledge Workshop. He noted that the workshop represented an opportunity to evaluate the process and outcome of EPA negotiations and to discuss how those lessons might be applied to future trade liberalization efforts. He also observed that, from the Caribbean perspective, negotiations with Canada are motivated by the impending expiration (in 2011) of the preferential trade agreement between Canada and the Commonwealth members of the Caribbean.

Mr. Ramdeen drew three key conclusions. First, his evaluation of the EPA was that it is not perfect, but was nevertheless a good agreement for the Caribbean.

Second, he noted that the days of preferential trade agreements are ending and that the Caribbean countries would have to focus in the future on reciprocal trade liberalization. He stressed, however, that there must still be a place for development concerns to be reflected in these trade agreements. Finally, Mr. Ramdeen argued that any Canada-CARICOM trade agreement should be modelled after the EPA which includes not just trade liberalization, but a built-in development agenda as well.

The third speaker at the workshop was Mr. Larry Placide, Director of the International Trade Negotiations Unit at the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce. His presentation was entitled, *A Private Sector Perspective on the CARIFORUM/EU EPA*.

In his remarks, Mr. Placide focused on business's opinion on the EPA, as well as the role of the private sector in trade negotiations. He noted that while the agreement was not perfect, it was supported by the business community, especially since it provided new opportunities for the region's services sector. In his view, the EPA also promoted intra-regional trade because it effectively lowered market access barriers between the Caribbean Community and the Dominican Republic as well as between CARIFORUM and the EU. Mr. Placide concluded by stating that businesses should always be actively consulted in trade negotiations because they are the most directly affected by any final agreement.

Following the first three speakers, the floor was opened and a lively discussion ensued. Some Parliamentarians focused on the perceived shortcomings of the agreement. Others raised the issue of transparency and public consultation. It was noted that there was a lack of involvement by labour groups in the consultation process and that the final texts of the EPA are not yet available to Parliamentarians. As a result, Parliamentarians do not have a good understanding of what is contained in the agreement or what its impact might be on their constituents. To aid in that understanding, Parliamentarians felt that it would be beneficial to be able to discuss the details of the EPA, and other future trade agreements, with subject matter experts.

The final speaker of the afternoon was Mr. Philip Rourke, Executive Director of the Centre for Trade Policy and Law at Carleton University. His presentation was entitled *Parliamentary Diplomacy: The Role of Parliament in Trade Policy Making*.

Mr. Rourke's main message was to encourage Parliamentarians to consider the linkages between their constituents, local input and international trade agreements; trade agreements have an impact on a wide range of policy areas including immigration, security and domestic regulation. The challenge is to engage citizens on issues that seem obscure but in fact can have tremendous impact at the local level. Some examples include intellectual property protection and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS).

One solution proposed by Mr. Rourke was that Parliamentarians need to expand the scope of their public engagement by looking beyond the "traditional" lobby groups like business associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and labour groups. He suggested that Parliamentarians should also seek to engage other organizations like groups dedicated to "fair trade" and the environment, to the various diaspora, and to international development organizations.

Conclusion

By all accounts, the Trade Knowledge Workshop was a success. Although the event was shorter than originally planned, it was exceptionally well-attended. More than 20 Parliamentarians, from the Senate and the House of Representatives, from Trinidad and Tobago attended the session, including the Minister for International Trade and Industry, the President of the Senate and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. Participants expressed their satisfaction with the content of the workshop, but were disappointed that more time was not available for a more detailed discussion of other trade-related issues such as development, poverty and employment.

Above all, the Canadian delegation left the workshop with the impression that, given recent trade-related developments in the region, the timing of this workshop was excellent and there is considerable appetite for a similar region-wide event to be held in the near future.

Meeting with the National Coordinator of the Secretariat for the V Summit of the Americas

While in Port-of-Spain, the Canadian delegation met with His Excellency Luis Rodriguez, National Coordinator of the Secretariat for the V Summit of the Americas, which is to be held in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009. FIPA has been actively lobbying to play a more active role in the Summit of the Americas process. The President of FIPA, Luiz Carlos Hauly, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil wrote a letter in December 2007 to Ambassador Rodriguez formally requesting official participation for FIPA in the Summit process and the Summit itself. This letter followed the meeting that was held in Ottawa in November 2007 between Ambassador Rodriguez and FIPA Executive Committee Members Céline Hervieux-Payette, Senator, and James Bezan, MP. A specific proposal for FIPA involvement was also included with that letter. The purpose of the Canadian delegation's meeting with Ambassador Rodriguez was to follow up on that submission.

Ambassador Rodriguez emphasized that his vision is for the Summit to be a meaningful process, one that achieves real results concerning issues that affect citizens across the Americas – issues like crime and unemployment. He noted that previous Summits have yielded a total of 649 mandates but very little in terms of tangible progress towards improving peoples' lives. In his view, implementation of mandates should be an important component of the coming Summit of the Americas.

Members of the Canadian delegation took the opportunity to remind Ambassador Rodriguez that the implementation of policies and mandates from forums such as the Summit of the Americas must eventually go through the region's Parliaments. As such, more direct participation by Parliamentarians in those forums would be invaluable in advancing their goals; if Parliamentarians had a better understanding of, and a more active stake in, summits such as these, they would be in a better position to implement their recommendations.

Ambassador Rodriguez offered his active support to FIPA's request for observer status at the Summit, stating that he was eager for Parliamentarians to play a greater role in the process. He committed to raising the issue of FIPA participation at the next

meeting of the Summit Executive Committee and to discuss it personally with the Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza. He also suggested that FIPA might be interested in playing a role in the Summit Implementation Working Group (SIRG) mechanism which does preparation and follow-up work relating to the Summits. However, Ambassador Rodriguez also challenged FIPA to issue a detailed proposal and plan of action for how it could be more involved in the process. He stated that only with such a proposal in hand would any lobbying effort be successful.

Meeting with Parliamentarians from Trinidad and Tobago

The Canadian delegation also met with two of Trinidad and Tobago's leading Parliamentarians: the Honourable Senator Danny Montano, President of the Senate and the Honourable Penelope Beckles, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. At that meeting Parliamentarians discussed issues of concern in the region, such as the political and economic situations in Haiti and Cuba. They also discussed the possibility of FIPA holding a second Trade Knowledge Workshop or a FIPA Plenary Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago. It was suggested that FIPA follow up on that possibility with the President of the Senate and the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Meeting with the Director of the OAS National Office in Trinidad

The delegation's final meeting in Port-of-Spain was with Dr. Joseph Clement Campbell, the Director of the OAS National Office in Trinidad. The Canadian Parliamentarians once again put forward FIPA's request for formal involvement in the OAS and the Summit of the Americas process. They noted that the implementation of mandates involves costs to government, which is the responsibility of Parliamentarians; for this reason, FIPA needs to play a more active role in these bodies.

Dr. Campbell suggested that the best way for FIPA to make a meaningful contribution to the Summit process would be by participating in the SIRG meetings. He noted that draft resolutions and recommendations are developed and debated at those meetings, well in advance of the Summit; few decisions are made at the Summits themselves.

BARBADOS

The Canadian delegation spent two days in Barbados, meeting with Parliamentarians from that country, as well as businesses and members of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) and the Caribbean Development Bank (CBD).

Round Table hosted by the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery

While in Barbados, the delegation participated in a round table discussion with members of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM). Also participating in the roundtable were Canadian businesses active in the region, as well as local private sector businesses, associations and other interested groups. In total, 28 individuals joined the Canadian delegation for this discussion. The goal of the meeting was to exchange ideas on expanding Canada's economic relations with the Caribbean Community generally, and Barbados specifically.

It was noted that Canada is actively looking to re-engage in the region. The value of goods traded between Canada and the Caribbean is modest, but there are longstanding historical linkages between the two. Moreover, trade relations are harmonious and the investment relationship and people-to-people contact is strong.

The roundtable discussions took place in the context of the discussions on free trade negotiations between Canada and CARICOM. At present, Canada-CARICOM trade is governed through a preferential tariff agreement, but the delegation heard that these types of arrangements will be phased out and a new agreement is needed. It was noted that while the preferential tariff agreement focused only on trade in goods, a Canada-CARICOM free trade agreement needed to look beyond merchandise trade; Canada only accounts for 3% of CARICOM exports and 2% of imports. The true value of a trade agreement would be in including chapters on investment and services. Some participants also indicated their desire that a free trade agreement include specific provisions on entertainment services and tourism.

Other topics of discussion included investment in the financial services sector and the perception of Barbados as a tax haven. It was noted that Barbados is not a tax haven but that it is a low-tax jurisdiction, and like many other countries, offers tax incentives in certain industries in a transparent manner. Canada's double taxation agreement with Barbados was frequently highlighted as a catalyst to Canadian investment in the country and as a factor in making the Canadian financial services sector more competitive. Participants also discussed the benefits of investing in Barbados: Barbados is a conduit for Canadian investment into Latin America and the rest of the global economy. This helps achieve Canada's goal of trade diversification. It also helps Canadian companies be more competitive in those markets, creating jobs both in Canada and abroad.

Other subjects of discussion at the roundtable included the opportunities for closer co-operation in areas like environmental services, education and information technology services. Participants also identified health care training and services, entertainment and tourism and as areas where Canada and Barbados can work together more closely.

Meeting with Representatives of the Caribbean Development Bank

The delegation also met with several representatives of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), of which Canada is a founding member and a major financial contributor. The CDB is both a bank and a development agency, primarily located in Barbados but active across the Caribbean. The delegation received an overview of the operations of the CDB, including a review of its major initiatives in areas like fiscal indebtedness, the environment and poverty reduction.

Meetings with Parliamentarians from Barbados

While in Barbados, the Canadian delegation had several opportunities to meet their parliamentary counterparts from that country – establishing contacts and discussing potential areas for closer cooperation, including through FIPA. The delegation was also given the opportunity to observe the Barbados Parliament in session.

The meetings with Barbadian Parliamentarians were particularly timely because many Parliamentarians in the country have only recently been elected or appointed; a general election in January 2008 resulted in a change in government in that country for the first time in 13 years. As a result, most of the Parliamentarians that the delegation met were not aware of FIPA or the opportunities it provided for engagement with their counterparts from across the hemisphere. As in Trinidad, Parliamentarians from Barbados appeared willing and interested in expanding their involvement with FIPA. Immediate follow-up by the Canadian Section of FIPA, or by the FIPA Executive is needed to build upon these ties.

OTHER MEETINGS

In both Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Barbados, the delegation attended numerous briefings presented by Canadian officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. These sessions provided the delegation with a better understanding of the objectives and challenges of the Canadian missions in these countries and were a valuable source of information on the economic and political situation in the region. These sessions also allowed the delegation to further build linkages between the missions and FIPA.

In addition, the visit to Barbados provided the delegation with opportunities to meet with representatives of several Canadian businesses active in the region. These meetings allowed the delegation to better understand the objectives of the Canadian business community active in the Caribbean, and to be more aware of the concerns and challenges they face.

CONCLUSION

In the deliberations following the visit in the Caribbean, the Canadian delegation concluded that its participation in the Trade Knowledge Workshop and meetings had been a productive experience. This visit provided an excellent opportunity for the Canadian Section of FIPA to promote the Parliamentary Association and encourage further Caribbean participation in the upcoming activities. The Canadian Parliamentarians also felt that the visit allowed them to make contact with their counterparts in the Parliaments of both countries, to exchange ideas and perspectives on current issues and to generally familiarize themselves with the two Caribbean countries.

Finally, the Canadian delegation would like to thank the department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Technical Secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, and the Canadian High Commissions from Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados for their tremendous support in the planning and coordination of the program.

Respectfully submitted,

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Co-leader
Canadian Section

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant, M.P.
Co-leader
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of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
of the Americas (FIPA)

of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
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Appendix

AN OVERVIEW OF FIPA'S MARCH 2007 TRADE KNOWLEDGE WORKSHOP: RESULTS AND BENEFITS FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

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In March 2007, the Canadian section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) hosted the inaugural Trade Knowledge Workshop for Parliamentarians. The purpose of the event was to build the trade-related technical capacity of parliamentarians, as well as to provide a forum in which to discuss the broader effects of trade and trade policy on society in general. The three-day event was attended by 16 parliamentarians representing eight FIPA member countries: Bolivia, Colombia, Dominica, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico and Canada. A second such workshop is being planned for the spring of 2008.

Parliamentarians have an important role to play in the field of international trade and trade policy. Trade is widely recognized as an integral component of economic growth and prosperity around the world. At the same time, international trade, trade agreements and trade policy can have profound impacts at the national and local levels.

The world of international trade is growing ever more complex. The subject of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations have moved from the relatively straightforward topic of tariff reduction to issues such as subsidies, intellectual property protection, regulation, sanitary/phytosanitary measures, investment protection, trade in services and labour mobility, to name a few. Lack of progress on these subjects has, in turn, led to an explosion of bilateral and regional trade agreements as countries attempt to establish or secure access to markets around the world.

The importance of trade to economic growth and prosperity, the complexity of trade negotiations, and the impact of trade liberalization on local communities are all issues of direct interest to parliamentarians. Elected representatives need to be in a position not only to influence the international trade policy development process, but also to understand and interpret the implications of those policies for their constituents.

In an effort to better equip parliamentarians to do so, the *Trade Knowledge Workshop for Parliamentarians* focused on two key areas: trade rules, the principles of the multilateral trading system and their effect at the local level; and providing parliamentarians with the analytical tools to adapt and react to global trade rules to promote sustainable development, poverty reduction and growth.

The first of these two areas – the overview of trade rules and the role of parliamentarians – provided a foundation of knowledge for all workshop participants. Parliamentarians received an overview of the fundamentals of the multilateral trading system and discussed issues such as subsidies, standards to protect public health and the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism. They also debated topics such as the

fundamental economic assumptions that underpin trade liberalization efforts, and discussed the role of parliamentarians and parliamentary organizations in creating trade and economic policy that is responsive to local needs. Participants came away from these sessions with a better understanding, not only of the multilateral trading system, but also of the complexity of trade policy.

The second component of the workshop focused on grassroots participation in trade consultation and the local impacts of trade. Elected representatives attended sessions on public consultation; trade liberalization and poverty reduction; and gender and trade.

In the session on public consultation, parliamentarians had the opportunity to learn about and discuss subjects like how to effectively communicate trade policy to constituent groups so as to maximize public participation and input.

The session on poverty reduction helped to strengthen the capacity of elected members to identify and analyze trade policy options that have an impact on poverty reduction. Trade is acknowledged to create economic growth, but it does not eliminate poverty. Trade must therefore be accompanied by other policies to ensure that a maximum number of constituents benefit from the growth created by trade. This session identified issues that limit the diffusion of the gains from trade to the wider population and underscored the challenge for parliamentarians in directing policy in an informed and proactive way.

The session on gender addressed the fact that trade affects men and women differently, although the effects may not be immediately obvious. Parliamentarians are used to analyses of the economic sectors that can expect to gain or lose from trade liberalization, but seldom does the analysis penetrate any deeper. In this session, parliamentarians learned how trade can affect men and women differently through such means as differences in gender composition by industry and the effects of job-related relocation on men and women, especially in cases where one income-earner leaves the home for work while the other remains.

In addition to the information presented in trade workshop sessions and the discussions that ensued, parliamentarians also benefited enormously from the exchange of ideas and viewpoints with elected members from other countries. FIPA is a large and diverse association; there are tremendous differences across its membership in terms of geographic size, economic development, history, language and culture. As such, the trade workshop provided a forum for parliamentarians from diverse backgrounds to meet, to share their unique experiences and challenges, and to express their views on trade policy and development.

From these exchanges with other elected members, parliamentarians came away with an enhanced understanding of the broad impacts of trade and trade policy, not just for their own constituents but for those in dramatically different economic circumstances as well. They also gained a heightened awareness of the challenges other countries face with respect to issues like trade barriers, economic development and poverty reduction, and how those challenges compare to the ones they face at home.

Based on the success of the workshop, the wide range of trade-related issues that could be discussed and the importance of trade issues to parliamentarians, several participants expressed their hope that similar workshops be held annually. For this reason, FIPA Canada is currently in the process of planning a second policy workshop which would take place in the spring of 2008.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA)
ACTIVITY	Trade Knowledge Workshop and Bilateral Visit
DESTINATION	Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and Bridgetown, Barbados
DATES	March 17 to 20, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Honourable Michel Biron Honourable Consiglio Di Nino
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mrs. Cheryl Gallant Mr. Marcel Lussier
STAFF	Mr. Michael Holden, Analyst Ms. Danielle Labonté, Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 14,807.18
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 9,505.58
HOSPITALITY	\$ 2,330.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,702.03
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 544.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 123.46
TOTAL	\$ 29,012.25