

I recently had an occasion to visit the beautiful island of Saint Lucia for the celebration of the life of Sir John Compton, father of Saint Lucian independence. The impressive gathering of leaders and statesmen drew attention not only to the deep respect held for Sir John, but also to the strong linkages and shared interests that spread across the Caribbean.

Looking forward, I eagerly anticipate more trips to the region, as I am interested in fostering the relationships I began to develop in Saint Lucia.

We have much to discuss, and much work to do.

Further to my remarks on the successful conduct of recent elections in Jamaica, I should add that Canada recognizes the priorities that Prime Minister Golding has set forth for Jamaica. Investment in education, human rights, combatting crime, job creation, transparent and representative government: these all resonate with Canada's own values and priorities.

We have accomplished a great deal in 45 years of bilateral engagement. For example, one aspect of building the "prosperous and safe neighbourhood" that Prime Minister Harper spoke of is the realm of security.

Canada-Jamaica defence cooperation is flying high, both literally and figuratively. The more than one thousand Jamaican graduates of our Military Training Assistance Program include pilots and other aircrew.

Together we have built the Jamaica Military Aviation School, which was officially opened in December 2006.

Next year, Canada will meet with defence leaders from Jamaica and throughout the region, as we host the Conference of the Ministers of Defence of the Americas.

Progress on national and regional security contributes to an enabling environment for economic prosperity, just as free markets both require and support free societies. As our Americas Strategy unfolds in the coming months, we will work with our Jamaican colleagues on all areas of our engagement.

Ladies and gentlemen, the black, gold and green flag of Jamaica has flown for a little longer than Canada's red Maple Leaf: our new flag was not unveiled until 1965. But both flags represent peoples who are committed to democratic governance, economic opportunity, and mutual peace and security. Canada and Jamaica share this vision and this important and honourable duty: to do right for our people and to do good in the world. As neighbours, partners and friends.

Thank you.