

Probably not so much during the winter, though. The swimming conditions can be a bit too solid.

The fact that Wasaga Beach is in my own constituency is purely coincidental, of course.

Many of you know that engagement in the Americas is a foreign policy priority for Canada. As you will have seen, this priority was significantly underlined in the Speech from the Throne last week and in the Prime Minister's reply.

Central to this was the idea that Canada can offer a model of democratic freedom and economic openness combined with social safety nets, equitable wealth creation and sharing across regions to those countries working to build a better future.

We are committed to playing a bigger role in the Americas, and to doing so for the long term.

The foundations of our Americas Strategy are:

- to build prosperity through increased trade, investment and economic opportunities;
- to meet new security challenges, as well as natural disasters and health pandemics; and
- to strengthen and promote our foundational values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Prime Minister Harper's visit to the Caribbean last July signalled Canada's renewed engagement in the Caribbean.

This includes the launch of Canada-CARICOM free trade negotiations, for which the initial meeting has already taken place. It means a significant increase in CIDA development funding over the next 10 years for the Caribbean region.

We have also increased the number of scholarships we provide to Caribbean graduate and undergraduate students to strengthen linkages between universities and colleges in the region and Canada. Caribbean students will begin their studies and research in Canada early next year under the initiative announced by the Prime Minister during his visit.

Canada will also host the Caribbean Development Bank's Board of Governors meeting in Halifax in 2008.

With a view to advancing an even stronger relationship with nations of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Prime Minister Harper invited all CARICOM leaders to a Canada-CARICOM summit here in Canada in 2008.