

state-sponsored bodies would be "GONGOs" or Government Organised Non-governmental Organisations. Therefore, Canadian NGO engagement has little to do with Cuban civil society. Others argued that notwithstanding these points, the work of Canadian NGOs is often beneficial to Cubans since it aims at improving their life, lets them pursue their interests and builds confidence. A warning was made not to overload the NGOs with political sub-texts and subversive objectives. Instead, attention should be paid to the on- the-ground benefits of their grass roots activities.

Senator Lois Wilson reflected on her experience with the Protestant Church community in Cuba. She said that while congregations often have a socialist leaning they are generally not pro-government. The atmosphere in Cuba seems to be now more relaxed. The Communist ideology is bankrupt. Joining a church no longer has serious repercussions and the Protestants have been fostering links with the outside world.

## **5. Concluding Remarks**

At the end of the roundtable, the Chair asked all roundtable participants for their final word. The following is a summary of what they wished to emphasise or recommend for Canadian Foreign policy:

- Economic survival activities, including self-employment and some "black" market activities, should be legalised and adequately taxed.
- Foreign policy towards Cuba should remain positive. The "Canadian filter" put aside, Canada should heed the hostilities of the U.S.A. towards the island and have a non-rhetorical, more realistic and consistent approach. Canada has some room to be tougher.
- A peaceful transition in Cuba is of great geopolitical importance to Canada. Canada should help in any way possible to prevent collapse, paralysis or the growth of rabid anti-Americanism on the island. Cuba has also a symbolic value for Canadians and the Hemisphere. Cuban revolution survived and the Cuban leadership stood up to "American hegemony." Therefore, the nature of Canada's relationship with Cuba reflects itself positively in Canada's dealings with the rest of the Hemisphere and the OAS. Nonetheless, the prospects for a radical and rapid change in Cuba are minimal at this point. Transition will likely require a generational change. Canada should not invest much more in the Cuban economy than it presently does.
- Canadian foreign policy should target people in the administration likely to lead Cuba during and after a potential transition, as well as youth.
- Canadian foreign policy should pay attention the role of the armed forces in a potential Cuban transition. The Cuban military not only has contact with the rest of the world but