

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic, with 7 million people and a landmass of nearly 50,000 square kilometres, is the second-largest country in the Caribbean after Cuba.

With export trade estimated at \$100 million in 1995, the Dominican Republic holds considerable potential for Canadian exporters. It is a sophisticated market with a healthy economy — 4.8-per-cent GDP growth in 1995 and relatively low inflation — that offers good potential in agri-food and forest commodities as well as in manufactured products from automobile parts to telecommunications equipment to consumer goods.

Some 60 per cent of its economy is based on services in tourism and telecommunications, two sectors in which the Dominican Republic excels. Its mineral resources remain largely untapped, except for the mining of nickel (Falconbridge) which has prospered from sustained world prices.

There is, however, considerable exploration taking place in natural gas (local investors), crude oil (Mobil),

and gold (Canadian-owned Eldorado/Energold) which may lead to the discovery of substantial commercial quantities.

There is also a great deal of activity taking place at Rosario, a major gold deposit, with Quebec-based SM Group International recently signing a multimillion-dollar contract with the state-owned Gold Mining Company for the Rosario project.

The laying of the foundation for sustainable economic development and the modernization of the economy has already been started by the current government. A recently approved new law of foreign investment should help to stimulate interest in the international investment community.

Canada is one of the Dominican Republic's largest investors with more than \$1.5 billion in the mining, banking, tourism, manufacturing and telecommunications sectors, and planned projects should contribute an additional US\$300 million to this total.

Trinidad and Tobago

Canada has a long-standing relationship with Trinidad and Tobago that is built on a solid base of friendship and commercial exchange. With further improvement in foreign reserves, lower interest rates and a government fiscal surplus, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago registered 2.3-per-cent growth in the first half of 1995.

Over the last several years, Canadian exports to Trinidad and Tobago have decreased slightly, while the value of imports have dropped significantly, largely due to a decline in world petroleum prices.

However, 1994 saw a resurgence in trade activity with Canadian exports totalling \$63.5 million, compared to \$52.5 million in 1993. Statistics as of April 1995 indicate that Canadian exports are continuing to grow at a pace double that of the same period in 1994. Canadian investment in

Trinidad and Tobago is currently estimated at \$43 million.

Canada's principal exports to Trinidad and Tobago in 1994 were paper, food products, pharmaceuticals, electrical and telephone equipment and plastic resins. Major imports included steel coils and rods, petroleum, fish and rum.

Prospects Promising

The prospects for growth are promising in a number of areas, including telecommunications, agri-food, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas equipment, and plastic processing equipment. Of particular significance is the development of a 3-million-tonne-per-year LNG plant, estimated at US\$1.5 billion, which is being pursued by a consortium of petroleum companies. In addition, a major tourism development plan has been recommended that would see the addition of over 7,000 hotel and guest rooms over the next 10 years.

In 1994, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) sponsored two highly successful trade events in Trinidad and Tobago. In April, 31 Canadian companies exhibited their products and services at the Canadian Pavilion at EXPO '94 in Port of Spain and seven Canadian trading houses participated in a mission to the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. *EXPO '96 (April 19-28) is expected to feature some 500 exhibitors from the region and to attract 500,000 visitors over the nine-day show.*

In September 1995, a group of eight business executives from Trinidad met with Canadian counterparts in Toronto, Montreal and Halifax to discuss joint-venture opportunities in such areas as petrochemicals, packaging, aquaculture, processed meats, industrial batteries, natural gas and printing inks.