

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's interest in Latin America has in the past generally been one of benign neglect. With the entry into force of the NAFTA and the economic and political structural reforms taking hold in the region, this will no longer do. No rational calculation of Canadian national interests can place Latin America in the nether world. Canada can make a difference in the region. Our close ties with the U.S. will allow us to play a bridging role with Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and others. Historic links with the Commonwealth Caribbean can ensure that interests of these micro-economies are taken fully into account to the degree that they themselves pull together more effectively. The end of the Cold War and the revitalization of multilateralism (including Canada's entry into the OAS) enhance our ability to play a helpful role with regard to regional issues such as human rights, democratic institution building, debt, curbing the drug trade and improving the environment. At the same time, we have increasingly important commercial and economic interests to pursue with several of the countries in the region.

This Paper examines how Latin American and Caribbean countries have begun a deep transformation and how this process of change heightens the importance of the region for Canada and Canadian foreign policy. The heart of the Paper will be found in Section 4, where several proposals are made for strengthening our relations with the region, on a mutually beneficial basis, under three main headings: creating prosperity on a sustainable basis (trade promotion, NAFTA accessions, investment support, development assistance and environmental cooperation); political good governance (technical expertise in the area of human rights, elections, regulatory reform and the role of the military; expanded membership in and renewal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; the evolution of Cuba); and building bridges (establishing a Foundation for the Americas; institution building at the OAS; a more active role for educational institutions and policy; and a program of Ministerial visits). Few of these proposals would require additional funding, although some would necessitate adjustments between programs and regions. All would better position Canada to assert its place as a nation of the Americas.