

post-Castro era, when Canadian trade with the island may expand, along with Canada's influence there in matters of democratic development.

A future together

Geo-strategic and trade interests have long combined with development aid, human-rights concerns and myriad people-to-people links in Canada's relations with its southern neighbours.

Today, the need for cooperation and understanding within the region is even more critical. And Canada is more committed than ever to the progress of democracy in the region, particularly in the face of enduring poverty and problems of inequity.

FOCAL Executive Director Eduardo del Buey, who has been associated with Latin America for more than 30 years, remembers a time when internationalists resisted getting involved in the region. "It was the kiss of death from a career point of view," he says. "Now, our best and our brightest are going there."

They should. Canada's geographic reality as a country of the Americas represents an important opportunity for its own economic prosperity and the broadening of its political partnerships. It also has a responsibility to model and share Canadian values and practices in the areas of democracy, human rights and good governance.

Armony says his Latin American academic counterparts hold Canada up as "an example of innovation, efficiency

and social harmony." It's possible to idealize the Canadian example too much, he adds, yet the country's opportunity to effect change in the region is real.

"Canada has terrific potential to become a force toward democracy and social equality throughout the hemisphere," he says. "Canada has strong credibility capital." 🍁

Learn more about Canada and the Americas at www.americascanada.gc.ca.

Canada-Brazil cooperation: Experts examine seedlings at an experimental farm supported by Canada in Ouro Preto, Brazil. The project encourages the planting of trees that are profitable for small farmers while preserving the forest environment.

There are a number of challenges down the road at the OAS in which Canada may play a role. Dosman says that the post-9/11 world is a more complex place for foreign policy—and for the organization.

There are especially massive pressures over the future of Haiti and growing concerns about social unrest in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela. Mr. Durand talks of an "emerging polarization, where South America is giving indications it might want to go its own way."

There's also the potential for disagreement over Cuba, which will come to the fore-front post-Castro. Mr. Durand says Cuba will be a "tremendously difficult" issue for the OAS. "It is the elephant in the room."

Read about Canada and the OAS at www.international.gc.ca/latinamerica/oas-en.asp.



▲ The Hall of the Americas at the Organization of American States headquarters in Washington: Canada has been successful in getting the OAS to respond to its priorities.

◀ Canada's Ambassador to the OAS, Paul Durand: Joining the organization was "a very significant foreign policy decision" for Canada.

photo: Pierre St-Jacques/CIDA-ACDI



photo: courtesy of the OAS