

totalled over 300 million dollars in 1993. It is also a country in which several Canadian firms are pursuing investment possibilities. Some companies already are well established here, Sherritt being the most prominent. I would note here that Sherritt has had an active involvement in the Cuban nickel industry and in the oil and gas sector since 1991. By 1993, for example, Canadian imports of Cuban nickel through Sherritt accounted for over 60 per cent of our total imports from Cuba. Cuba is a country that over 100 000 Canadians visit each year. Eugene Whelan reminded me the other day of another significant Canadian population in Cuba — dairy cattle. It is also a country in which a number of Canadian universities, research institutes and non-governmental organizations [NGOs] have long-standing linkages that benefit both Cubans and Canadians.

Indeed, it is Canadians involved in these kinds of activities who have urged the Government to do more at the official level to strengthen our linkages with the Cuban government and the Cuban people. What they are telling us is that Cuba is at a point when it is more important than ever for governments to remain in contact. They also tell us that we need to do more to enable those outside government to work with their Cuban counterparts, with training, humanitarian assistance and technical exchanges.

I and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, André Ouellet, agree with these views. Canada is in the habit internationally of supporting, where appropriate and where we can, peaceful change leading to more pluralistic societies and economies. To do so is in our short-term as well as in our long-term interests. In some parts of the world, the process of change is complicated by long-standing conflicts. In some cases the international community may have become involved too late in the game. It is all too easy to see the results in terms of human suffering, as well as the impact on neighbouring countries. It is something no-one can seriously wish for this hemisphere. In the case of Cuba, I think we all have the opportunity to become involved at an early stage of the reform process. We can provide advice and support that could underpin positive, orderly change in the economic and political spheres. Many of the organizations and businesses alluded to earlier have already contributed much in this vein. Governments can play a role as well, by supporting the non-governmental sector, but also by sustaining a regular and open consultative process at the official level.

Beyond the strictly bilateral, I would add that as a long-standing believer in multilateralism, Canada attaches special importance to the role of international organizations. Even if they only can maintain civil international discourse on some international issues, they have made a valuable contribution. Thus, Canada is a strong supporter of universality of membership, whether it be full international membership in such global bodies as the UN, or full regional membership in regional organizations.