



FOCAL

Canadian Foundation for the Americas
Fondation canadienne pour les Amériques
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FOCAL APPLAUDS CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO THE AMERICAS

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) welcomes Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier's October 19 announcement that Canada needs to "stand tall in the western hemisphere" and play a larger role in the Americas. Haiti serves as a positive example of Canadian engagement with hemispheric partners, and Canada has already demonstrated that it can play a key role in the region. "Our relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean is about partnerships," says FOCAL executive director Carlo Dade. "It is about sharing Canadian experiences, not exporting values. Now is the time for Canada to invest in the Americas."

Canadians also seem to support this shift: a recent Léger Marketing poll revealed that Canadians place Latin America as the second highest priority area (after Europe) when it comes to advancing Canada's interests. The full results will be released on November 8.

In addition, FOCAL and the Inter-American Dialogue conducted a fact-finding mission to Haiti in July which found that more regional involvement is needed. The participants agreed that Haiti is indeed making significant strides, especially regarding education and security, but the country needs additional support in order to consolidate these gains. This is not the time for countries to cut back on their involvement, and Canada is on the right track in reaffirming its commitment. FOCAL and the Inter-American Dialogue will soon be releasing a report on this mission.

To explore these new government priorities, FOCAL is coordinating a conference with the Centre for Trade Policy and Law (CTPL) and the Canadian Foreign Policy Journal that will focus on Canada and the Americas. This conference will take place in the spring of 2008 with invited speakers including Luis Alberto Moreno, President of the Inter-American Development Bank, and Rick Waugh, President and Chief Executive Officer of Scotiabank.

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) is an independent, non-partisan think tank that fosters informed analysis and debate on social, political and economic issues in the Americas.

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For more information, or to schedule an interview with a FOCAL analyst, please contact Rachel Schmidt, Communications Director, at 613-562-0005 x242 or rschmidt@focal.ca