

This report has since been used as grounds for the Canadian government to detain and harass former members of the Aristide government, most recently resulting in the firing of Phares Pierre from Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board. Others accused in the alleged incident, such as Ronald Dauphin (the subject of recent Amnesty International appeal) remained in prison without trial – although the January 12th earthquake destroyed Haiti's National Penitentiary.

### Is Canada helping at all?

Throughout all this, the Canadian government has portrayed its efforts as beneficial to Haiti and Haitians. Concrete evidence of good work is scarce. Aid in Haiti is largely dominated by non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations, usually directed by non-Haitians. As NGOs pay international-level, rather than Haitian, wages, the funds can never go as far as investments in existing Haitian institutions.

As for government-led projects, a journalist for Maclean's was able to find one small-scale Canadian project, a 45-children orphanage built by donations from individual members of the Canadian police force. This lack of impact mirrors other regions where Canada claims a developmental role, such as Afghanistan and Canada's First Nations.

Everyone can see that Haiti urgently needs help. However, that help must be coupled with an understanding of Haiti's history, and recognition of Haiti's poor majority, who have too often been pushed aside by Haiti's elite and their international backers.

**This CHAN pamphlet was originally printed in the *Global Educator* (Winter 2010), the journal of the British Columbia Teachers for Peace and Global Education ([www.pagebc.ca](http://www.pagebc.ca)).**

### Selected references

*Canada in Haiti.* by Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton (Red Publishing).  
*Damming the Flood.* by Peter Hallward (Verso Books).  
*Press for Conversion!* (Issues #60-63) edited by Richard Sanders (Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade).

**For more on Canada in Haiti see: [canadahaitiaction.ca](http://canadahaitiaction.ca)**

# Canada in Haiti

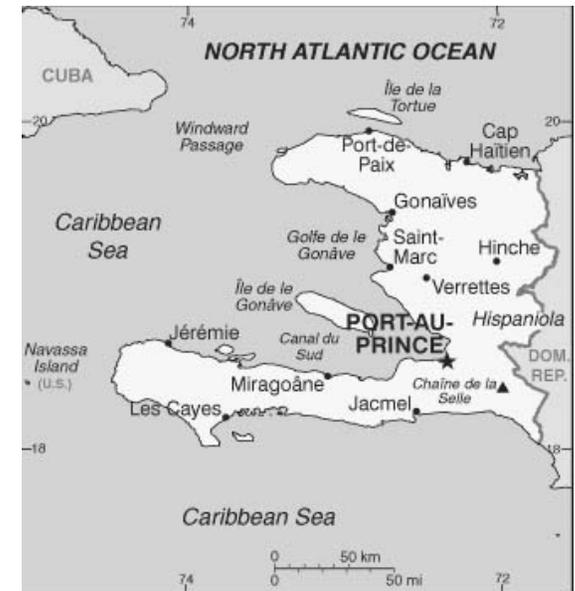
## A brief history

by Stuart Hammond (Haiti Solidarity BC)

### Canada's Caribbean commitment

Few Canadians know that Haiti is Canada's largest aid commitment in the Americas, and second-largest commitment in the world after Afghanistan. When noticed at all, Haiti is known as a perpetual 'failed state', racked by food riots, contentious elections, coup d'états, and, on January 12 2010, a devastating earthquake.

Even before the earthquake, much of the population suffered from lack of access to food. Haiti's cost of living is close to that of Canada, yet the average Haitian takes home between 75¢ and \$2 U.S. a day. Even those Haitians employed in more developed sectors, such as garment manufacture, face difficult conditions, with the wage set at about 3 U.S. dollars per day.



The January 12 2010 earthquake devastated the cities of Port-au-Prince and Jacmel, and surrounding areas.

Canada's stated role in Haiti is to provide security and stability through agencies such as CIDA, the RCMP, and international bodies such as the United Nations. However, a closer look shows that Canada has fostered the opposite. In 2004, Canada, along with the U.S. and France, played a role in ousting Haiti's elected president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, and in supporting a coup that overturned all levels of elected government.

Six years after the coup, Haiti remains occupied by the UN police and military force known by the acronym MINUSTAH, former president Aristide lives in exile in South Africa, and Haiti's civil administration

remains in tatters. The U.S. and Canadian response to the earthquake added over 10 000 more troops to the country, furthering these woes.

### **Haiti, then and now**

If few Canadians know of Canada's role in Haiti, even fewer know Haiti's remarkable history. Established in 1804, Haiti is the second-oldest republic in the Western hemisphere. Haiti was once part of the French colony of Saint Domingue, a slave sugar plantation. But in 1791, Haitians began to resist, fighting and winning the only successful slave revolt in human history.

Haiti's independence struggle was deeply intermingled with the French Revolution ideologically and in fact. Haitians took up the device of 'Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality', and demanded equality for all, regardless of skin colour. Haitian delegates presented these demands to the new Republican Assembly in France.

The presence of a free black republic also sent shockwaves throughout the Americas. Haiti's very existence set up a particularly antagonistic relation with the nearby republic of the United States, with its own large black slave population. U.S. Marines occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934, and difficult relations have persisted to this day.

### **Canada and Haiti**

Canada's relations with Haiti date back to this historic period. There are records of immigration from Haiti to Quebec dating from the 1700s, when both were part of the French Empire. Exchange slowed as France lost its colonies in the New World in the mid-18th century.

Relations between Canada and Haiti grew again in the early 20th century, this time between French-speaking elites in both countries. French Canadians began to replace the French and Belgian missionaries, dispersed by the World Wars, who had dominated Haiti's Catholic community. Meanwhile the wealthy, educated Haitian elite chose Quebec as a destination for education and immigration. These French-speaking immigrants integrated well into Canadian society. In 1964, Dr. Monestime, who had moved to the francophone community of Mattawa, Ontario, was elected as the first black mayor in Canada.

The pattern of immigration changed in the 1970s and 80s as poor, Kreyol-speaking Haitians fled the Duvalier dictatorship. Perhaps as a reflection of the earlier, elite contacts, Canadian government documents have persisted in treating Haitians as a French-speaking people, even

though the majority of Haitians speak Haitian Kreyol. A notable exception to this rule was educators; francophone teachers immediately realised that young Haitian immigrants required French-as-a-second-language classes.

### **What is Canada doing in Haiti?**

Immigration provides a long-standing connection between Canada and Haiti. In part a response to Haitian immigration, Haiti became one of the first Latin American and Caribbean countries where Canada had official policy and relations. The size of the Haitian-Canadian population in Canada today, 90% of it located in Quebec, numbers over 80 000 people.

Yet the larger part of Canada's engagement in Haiti arises is part of Canada's shift towards the United States in the late 20th century. In 1988 and 1994, Canada signed the Free Trade and NAFTA agreements, and in 1989, Canada joined the Organization of American States (OAS). These developments have seen Canada take on the role of junior partner in the U.S.'s traditional 'backyard'.

The most visible result of this shift came in February 2004, when U.S., French, and Canadian troops removed President Aristide from office. International planning for Aristide's removal took place in Ottawa, under the Liberal government of Prime Minister Jean Chretien. The international force installed an unelected government, which was led by Gerard Latortue from 2004 to 2006.

The Latortue government cracked down violently on the poverty-stricken Haitian population, concentrating their efforts on the slums of Cité Soleil and Bel Air in Port-au-Prince, causing thousands of deaths. Canada's response was silent support. In November 2004 Prime Minister Paul Martin even made the first visit to Haiti by a Canadian Prime Minister, and appointed Haitian-born Michaëlle Jean as Canada's Governor General.

Instead of condemning the coup regime, Canada supported efforts to tarnish the ousted government. An egregious case was CIDA's funding of the now discredited National Coalition for Haiti Rights (NCHR) to produce a report accusing the ousted government of committing a massacre in the region of St. Marc. Although the NCHR investigation produced no evidence, its conclusion accused the ousted government of barbaric acts.