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Press Release

A New Deal Between CIDA and Canadian NGOs

Canadian NGOs are looking for a “new deal” with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The national aid agency’s decisions to fund the programs of Canadian non-governmental organizations have been dogged with controversy after it was learned that aid Minister Bev Oda refused the advice of her officials and cut off funding to the church based human rights group KAIROS.

Hundreds of Canadian organizations working in partnership with CIDA are now in doubt about “whether they can rely upon CIDA’s public standard or whether these standards may be elbowed out of the way for political reasons”, says Gerry Barr, President-CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation.

CCIC offers to facilitate consultations between CIDA and NGOs

The CCIC leader is calling for a new “Cooperation Agreement” between his Council and CIDA, which sets out shared principles and commitments to support each other’s work. Barr says that his Council is ready to facilitate consultations between CIDA and the NGO community and to work with CIDA to promote a professional and accountable sector. But, he says, CIDA needs to commit to transparency and a new policy framework for its relationship with civil society organizations. “They need to be ready to listen”, says Barr, “civil society organizations have developed principles for development effectiveness. CIDA’s approaches need to be informed by those principles.”

Gerry Barr says that CIDA’s standards for decision-making have fallen into disrepute recently with examples of de-funding of organizations who have taken public positions that have run at cross purposes with positions espoused by the Harper government. “These are citizen’s voices”, says Barr, “and they need to be considered in the mix when it comes to making public policy”.

CCIC has published a [model agreement](#) to “serve as the basis for beginning a discussion with the Agency and with Canadian Parliamentarians”, says Barr. The Model Agreement is rooted in the affirmation of shared principles. It includes a human rights approach to development and a respect for sustainable development strategies. This approach is supportive of the involvement of Canadian citizens and acknowledges the proper role of civil society organizations when it comes to advocacy to contribute to better public policy debate in Canada.

“We hope the Minister and Canadian Parliamentarians will respond positively to this important initiative,” says Barr.

For more information, contact

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