

Is Canada really back? International development sector's expectations shortchanged in Budget 2016

Ottawa – March 22, 2016. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) is disappointed by the modest increase in aid investments included in the federal budget unveiled today. After five years of significant decline in Canada's investments for addressing global development challenges, and commitments made by the Liberal Party of Canada during the last election campaign, expectations were high to see the government reverse that decline. While the amounts committed for 2016 and 2017, of \$128 million per year, do strengthen Canada's position on the global stage in the short-term, they are not enough to position Canada as a leader on the global stage in the long term.

"We are disappointed by the limited investments for the global fight against poverty included in this budget," said Julia Sanchez, President-CEO of CCIC. "During its first months in office, this government repeatedly asserted that 'Canada is back' on the global stage. And though the modest increases announced today are a move in the right direction, Canada needs to do much better than this if it is serious about playing a leadership role in the world."

CCIC was expecting to see a significant increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA) in this government's first budget, as well as a commitment to a realistic timetable for meeting the long-established, internationally-agreed target of allocating 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI) to ODA. In 2014, Canada reached a nearly all-time low in the percentage of GNI invested in ODA, positioning it at the tail end among OECD and G7 donor countries.

Also notably absent from the budget was any mention of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the new development framework adopted at the United Nations in September 2015. The SDGs are universal, and their fulfillment will require a whole-of-government approach and a commitment of significant new resources at home and abroad. On the year that the world has launched a new development framework, Canada's budget has failed to offer any clear indications on how it plans to contribute to achieving this global development agenda.

Budget 2016 does include a re-affirmation that, over the next year, the government will conduct a review of the international assistance policy framework, which will include consultation with Canadians and international aid organizations. "The policy review, which should be launched soon, will be a critical process for Canadian international development organizations to make a solid case for the need for more and better investments to address the pressing global challenges of our times" Ms. Sanchez added. "We have a lot of work ahead of us before we can fully assert that Canada is really back."

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About CCIC

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) is Canada's national coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) working globally to achieve sustainable human development. Our members represent a broad range of CSOs working in international development and humanitarian assistance — from faith-based and secular groups to labour unions, cooperatives and professional associations. CCIC seeks to end global poverty and to promote social justice and human dignity for all.

Key Facts

- Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA, or aid) went into freefall in 2011, dropping from a high that year of \$5.5 billion to \$4.9 billion in 2013/14. The International Assistance Envelope (IAE) – a measure of our real aid commitments to reducing poverty in developing countries – was cut by \$350 million between 2012 and 2014. It has been flat-lined since then.
- Canada's 25 countries of focus are the countries where the Canadian government most wants to make a difference – yet we are currently in the top three donors in just nine (36%). For less than one billion dollars (\$945 million), Canada could be among the top three donors in every one of its countries of focus.
- Canada invests just \$5.2 million per year in supporting women's rights organizations – 0.1% of total Canadian aid. As of 2014, Canada ranked a disappointing 15th in the OECD. For an additional \$15.6 million, or less than 50 cents per Canadian, Canada could quadruple its contribution to supporting women's equality, and move into the top eight women's equality funders in the OECD.
- In 2010 the government suddenly eliminated provisions that supported public engagement by civil society organizations. This move had significant and adverse effects on civil society capacity to engage, educate, and mobilize Canadians. Six years later, there are still no stand-alone programs for broad-based public engagement.
- The cost of refugees living in Canada in their first year is included in our overall aid budget. The integration of 25,000 Syrian refugees – which is absolutely the right thing to do – will increase our calculated level of ODA, without any increase in on-the-ground aid to developing countries. That's one reason why the IAE is a better measure of our real aid contributions.
- Canadian humanitarian assistance rose by nearly half between 2012-13 and 2013-14, from \$543 million to \$812 million. Humanitarian assistance now represents nearly 22 percent of overall international assistance (up from 14 percent five years ago). But the baseline funding budgeted for humanitarian assistance has remained virtually stagnant for the past five years, at just over \$300 million per year. A higher baseline budget would allow for longer-term and more effective humanitarian planning.

For more information, media can contact:

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