

More Focus, Please

A Canadian response to the challenges of African Development

By Peter Schneider

The President of the Canadian Council on Africa, Lucien Bradet, met with Prime Minister Paul Martin June 14th in order to drop off a copy of his new report, and to ask for more focus on the part of government agencies on finding a way for Canadian society to get involved with Africa. The report, made public while the meeting was taking place, is a detailed response to the issues put forward in two earlier high-profile documents: the report of the Blair Commission for Africa, and the UN report co-authored by Paul Martin and former Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo.

Mr. Bradet says it's time for Canada to get serious about a coherent, whole-of-government strategy for Africa. He notes, "When you look at the speeches on Africa, and you look at the implementation, from EDC and the CCC, and CIDA, and Natural Resources, it's not a very clear picture. What is the Africa policy? What is the strategy? Yes, we know there's a strategy for CIDA, but CIDA is only one element. Based on that, our members decided we have to study the situation from two aspects. First of all, what is Canada doing? Second, how do we compare with the other OECD countries?"

The Council's report is being released to coincide with its annual general meeting tomorrow. Members will convene in Ottawa and six other Canadian cities to update one another about current and upcoming activities. The organization includes members from all areas of Canadian society, blending the interests of government, educational institutions, and private business, with a focus on entrepreneurship.

Gaining access for Canadian companies to funds marked for African development is one of the Council's goals. Mr. Bradet says he has no problem with untying aid dollars, but that Canadian companies have to be able to compete more effectively in Africa, and require strategies and incentives to foster investment.

"What we're saying is that there are things we need to do," Mr. Bradet says. "There are tools that you have to put in place. For example, the PEMD (Program for Export Market Development) program helped small and medium enterprises to go into new markets for many years. Lo and behold, now that Africa is becoming an important place to do business and increase trade, PEMD disappears. Maybe it's done its job in Europe, in Asia, and South America, but in Africa it's just beginning. We are also saying, when it comes to call for bids and contracts, our system is not very efficient. But in other countries, such as the U.K., they've established their own program. The aid is still untied, but at the end of the day, the agency of the government of the U.K. is going to call for an international bid. Naturally, the chances of a businessperson from Liverpool hearing about that is higher than the guy from Saskatchewan to hear about it. So, there's a higher proportion of U.K. firms participating in that pool of aid money. We also want to hear about that, to be able to go for it. Huge amounts of money are going to Africa, and we applaud that. We want more of that."

Mr. Bradet would like to see a balance between multilateral and bilateral aid. "The more multilateral we go, the more it's just cheque-writing," he says. "With bilateral aid,

you can still play an active role, and expose your expertise to partners in Africa. Canadian knowledge is highly appreciated in Africa, but we need the instrument to get there. Huge companies can usually find their way, but we need it for the small and medium companies," Mr. Bradet says.

As Canadian firms become more engaged with Africa, Mr. Bradet would like to see the government evolve a way of rewarding corporate social responsibility. "We believe that maybe Canada should play a role in helping corporate people by helping them on the CSR side of things. In other words, when you do good social work, and public works, what's wrong with helping those companies who are bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into Africa by developing a program that will incentivize them by helping them on the CSR side? We think that there should be other incentive funds, such as the foreign development funds that exist in other countries, that help companies with specific social development projects," he says.

The Council's report is one more contribution to the growing literature on African private-sector development, and is intended as a means of increasing participation and interest in the future relationship of Canadians to the continent. "Generally speaking, we think that Canada is on the right track," Mr. Bradet says, "but let's make sure that if we double aid in the next couple of years, that it's not done without the participation of Canadian society. Without that participation, we don't feel that it's going to be acceptable to all Canadians in the long-term. Yes, debt relief is great, but how do we manage so that we are still involved as a society?"



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER SCHNEIDER, EMBASSY

Canadian Council on Africa President Lucien Bradet reviews the new report he presented to Prime Minister Paul Martin June 14th.

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EMBASSY | Listings

Wednesday, June 15

Conference: Decision-Making in Health Care
University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland (613-761-5549; ISM2005@ohri.ca). Through June 16. The third annual International Decision Making Conference, focusing on shared decision-making in health care, will be held at the University of Ottawa.

Nina's Tragedies National Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street (613-232-6727; www.cfi-icf.ca). 7 p.m. \$9; \$6 members. Another installment in the 2nd Israeli Film Festival, *Nina's Tragedies* focuses on Nadav, a troubled 14-year old who falls in love with his mother's younger sister, Nina. When Nina's husband dies in a terrorist attack, Nadav makes moves to take his place. Dir. Savi Gavison. Israel, 2003. Hebrew, with English subtitles.

Thursday, June 16

After Hours: "Fine Art, Music and Conversation"
National Gallery of Canada, 380 Sussex Drive (613-998-9998). 6 p.m. \$35; friends \$30. Registration required. Tour the exhibition *Leonardo, Michelangelo and the Renaissance in Florence*, enjoy Italian Renaissance music, and sample Italian delicacies.

Friday, June 17

Iceland celebrates its Proclamation of the Republic. Contact the embassy (613-482-1944).

Italian Week (613-224-4388; www.italianweekottawa.com). Italian Week stretches from June 9-19 and includes dozens of activities and special events. Highlights from the weekend are the Opera in Piazza, "Sway" Orchestra, an Italian Car Parade down closed streets, and a Dance Group from Centro Giovanile Formativo Italo-Canadese. Contact the Italian Week website and organizers for more information.

Lecture: "Bronzino's Portrait Identified" National Gallery of Canada, 380 Sussex Drive, Auditorium (613-998-8888). 12:15 p.m. \$5; \$4 students and seniors; \$3 friends. Catherine Johnston, curator of European art, delivers a lecture on "Bronzino's Portrait Identified: The Artist, the Banker, His Wife and Michelangelo's Pieta."

Felix is Part of the World University of Ottawa, Studio Leonard Beaulne, 135 Seraphin-Marion (613-232-6162). 8:30 p.m. Through June 25. Australian Theatre Group the Suitcase Royale will perform *Felix is Part of the World* as part of the Ottawa Fringe Festival (June 16-26). A previous prize-winner at the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

Saturday, June 18

Clouds of May Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street (613-232-6727; www.cfi-icf.ca). 7 p.m. \$9; \$6 for members. This funny 1999 motion picture tells the tale of Muzaffer, who returns to his hometown to make a movie. Meanwhile, his father struggles to keep his land in the face of development. Part of the Turkish Film Festival. Dir. Nuri Bilge Ceylan. Turkey, 1999. Turkish, with English subtitles.

Yoga Fundraiser Glebe Community Center, 175 Third Avenue (613-236-3545). 8 p.m. \$20; \$10 students. The Ottawa Radha Yoga Center is raising money for its at-risk youth program with a concert featuring the Ottawa-based sounds of Galittha, whose North Indian music incorporates aspects of folk and jazz.

Sunday, June 19

Bonjour Monsieur Schlomi Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street (613-232-3545). 7 p.m. \$9; \$6 for members. Part of the 2nd Israeli Film Festival, the warm film *Bonjour Monsieur Schlomi* is about 16 year-old Schlomi, who is gifted despite the drudgery of his everyday life. How he comes to this realization is at the heart of the film. Dir. Shemi Zarhin. Israel, 2003. Hebrew, with English subtitles.

Tales From Another England 2 Daly Avenue, Elevator B, Second Floor (613-232-6162). 9 p.m. \$8. Through June 25. English group Screwed and Clued present *Tales From Another England*, a dark comedy. Part of the Ottawa Fringe Festival (June 16-26).

Distortion Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street (613-232-6727; www.cfi-icf.ca). 9:15 p.m. \$9; \$6 for members. The second Israeli film of the evening, *Distortion* tells of Haim, a playwright whose local café is bombed as he walks home after visiting it one evening. Haim deals with this tragedy in a way only an artist could. Dir. Haim Bouzaglo. Israel/France 2005. Hebrew, with English subtitles.

Hip-Hop 4 Dumez Arts Court Theatre (613-232-6162). 10:30 p.m. \$8. Through June 26. Los Angeles-based group Sable and Batalian present *Hip-Hop 4 Dumez*, which has been described as "Abbott and Costello Meets OutKast." Part of the Ottawa Fringe Festival (June 16-26).