

Presentation to the Honourable Maria Minna,
Minister for International Cooperation on the Issue of

STRENGTHENING AID EFFECTIVENESS

We represent the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers, the national organization of the 12 provincial and territorial associations/ordre which regulate the practice of engineering in Canada and license the country's 160,000 plus professional engineers.

We are very pleased to be here today because the engineering profession cares about the quality and effectiveness of Canada's international development efforts and we welcome the chance to participate in CIDA's consultation process.

As professional engineers, we have two main reasons for getting involved in the dialogue about Canada's international development programs.

First, engineers contribute much of the technical expertise necessary for developing countries to maintain and enhance the welfare of their people through the provision of basic needs like shelter, water, sanitation and other essential infrastructure. As the fourth largest exporter of engineering services in the world, members of the Canadian engineering profession are integrally involved in the planning, design, operation, maintenance and transfer of infrastructure projects in developing countries.

**Thursday, September 20, 2001
1:30 p.m., Crowne Plaza Hotel
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**Presented by
Pierre Boucher, ing., President
Marie Lemay, P.Eng.,
Chief Executive Officer**

Our second reason for becoming involved is because of the international experience of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers, in assisting developing countries to establish accreditation and licensing systems for engineers. Numerous teams of Canadian professional engineers, through the auspices of the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers, have volunteered to help developing countries and their national engineering bodies to establish a general framework for accrediting engineering programs and systems for licensure. The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers works with engineering organizations and universities in developing countries to help set up systems which will allow them to educate and train engineering students to meet the rigorous engineering standards that are internationally recognized and respected.



CANADIAN COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS
CONSEIL CANADIEN DES INGÉNIEURS

In your consultation paper, *Strengthening Aid Effectiveness*, you have identified a number of key policy challenges for discussion. As our time is limited, we will restrict our comments to the policy area of sectoral concentration.

The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers generally supports the policy shift away from pure resource transfers and the provision of physical infrastructure toward approaches based on capacity development and institutional strengthening. We further recognize that since it is not possible for Canada to contribute in all sectors and in all areas, some rationalization of sectors and geographic areas is clearly required.

But while the concept of concentrating solely within the basic social sectors is appealing, it should not be perceived as a panacea for maximizing Canada's financial aid resources. We believe that CIDA's investment decisions must be based on clear selection criteria so that results and accountability will be assured. But it is critical that the direction of Canada's aid be flexible and balanced enough to respond to the needs of developing countries within the context of Canada's expertise.

In your publication, *Social Development Priorities: A Framework for Action*, CIDA signals its intention to prioritize the basic social sector, with a particular focus on four areas: health and nutrition, basic education, HIV/AIDS, and child protection. The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers believes that such a narrow focus

would unnecessarily restrict Canadian expertise in areas to those within the social sector and preclude the types of international work that the engineering profession has undertaken, for many years now, with developing countries.

Our experience in Latin America is an example of the type of sustainable and capacity building development work that might be lost with too narrow a sector focus. From 1994 to 1998, the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers received over \$200,000 in CIDA funding to collaborate with engineering organizations, industry, government and academia in Costa Rica, Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Peru to create a general framework for accrediting engineering programs and systems for licensure.

Due to economic and political problems in the 1970s and 1980s, the quality of engineering education and practice suffered greatly throughout Latin America. And it was widely recognized, in both the private and public sectors, that engineering, practiced responsibly and ethically, is essential for:

- the fundamental safety of a country's citizens by providing adequate infrastructure, from safe drinking water and sturdy buildings to reliable telecommunications and transportation systems;
- economic and social progress in a world which is increasingly shaped by technology;

- environmental protection and sustainability;
- employment preservation and job creation;
- providing employment opportunities for the advancement of historically disadvantaged groups, particularly women;
- eliminating unsafe working conditions; and
- eliminating the child labour in manufacturing.

These countries wanted to implement systems of accreditation and licensure so that they could gain the ability to produce local engineering graduates who practiced in accordance with appropriate national and international standards.

National standards essentially codify engineering that reflects local conditions, including cultural values, and utilizes technology appropriate to the geographic and infrastructural realities of individual countries. This creates the human resources capacity needed for sustainable development in a country's basic needs for shelter, water and essential infrastructure, along with more urban, technology-intensive activities.

The ability to meet international standards is important because this allows a developing country the credibility and expertise needed to participate more fully in the development of international institutions and multilateral agreements surrounding key global challenges - for example, the negotiation of international free trade in services agreements, and the ability to compete with or form consortia with foreign companies to take advantage of these international agreements.

Specifically because of our work in Latin America, a framework for the accreditation of engineering programs has been developed in both Spanish and English that can be used throughout Latin America. An accreditation system now operates in Mexico and systems are under development in Costa Rica, Chile and Colombia. Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay and Guatemala have all expressed initial interest in pursuing an accreditation system.

As you can see, Canadian expertise in accrediting engineering programs and developing licensure systems in developing countries has spread quickly within the international engineering community. And as a leader in negotiating engineering recognition agreements with developed countries, the Canadian engineering profession has the credibility and expertise to assist developing countries so that they can become full participants in future multilateral negotiations. It is a success story for Canadian engineers and Canada itself that is recognized worldwide.

For this reason, we recommend that

CIDA must always retain the flexibility to work in a diverse range of areas, in keeping with the various needs of developing countries and Canada's strengths. It is important that CIDA's efforts to improve its international development serve to build upon, and not limit, the international activities such as those long pursued by the engineering profession.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to address you today.