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## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

### Report on Canadian Official Development Assistance

Questions by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, October 27, 2010

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### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

#### REPORT ON CANADIAN OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, in early October 2010, the government tabled in the House of Commons the second *Report on Canadian Official Development Assistance* as required by the Official Development Accountability Act. The government has once again opted for under-reporting and minimum implementation when it comes to Canada's new aid legislation.

• (1400)

The act requires all responsible ministers for official development assistance to confirm that assistance disbursements and programming under their authority meet the following three tests: reduction of poverty, taking into account the perspectives of the poor, and consistency with international human rights standards.

Similar to the 2008-09 report, the 2009-10 report fails to fulfill, once again, the spirit and intention of the act. The report provides only a listing of activities undertaken with official development assistance with no analysis or systematic reference as to how or why the activities undertaken with official development assistance resources meet the three tests.

Why does the leader's government refuse to provide any substantial analysis and systematic reference to substantiate the minister's opinion that compliance to the act is being met in these three areas?

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** I thank the honourable senator for the question. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister for International Cooperation, who is responsible for CIDA, and the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas) have fully complied over the past years with their responsibilities as ministers. With regard to Minister Oda and our funding, as honourable senators know, we follow a principled approach to our international commitments.

We have made Canada's international assistance more effective, targeted, accountable and result-driven. CIDA funding, in particular, goes toward programs that directly affect poverty alleviation in the developing world. This leaves more dollars available for development work on the ground which will result in greater outcomes and greater results. Canadians expect their aid dollars to be spent on projects that directly affect the world's most vulnerable.

With regard to the honourable senator's specific question and the details she requests, I will seek further information from the departments involved in our assistance packages.

**Senator Tardif:** I thank the leader for verifying the question that I asked.

As a supplementary question, under the provisions of this same act, CIDA and other departments involved in disbursing official

development assistance funds must consult on the implementation of the act with civil society organizations, developing countries and multilateral institutions.

However, the minister responsible for CIDA decided to create the new 20-country focus for bilateral aid spending without any civil society consultation. This is but another example of this government not meeting the intent of its own laws. Why is this government not following its own consultation principles, and when will this government start providing Canadians with a transparent and accountable rationale for its development assistance policies, strategies and programs?

**Senator LeBreton:** I do not think there is any doubt about the programs and the intent of the minister responsible for CIDA, the Honourable Bev Oda. We have been clear all along that we would, as I mentioned a moment ago, be more targeted in the delivery of our aid dollars. We have been clear in outlining our countries of focus. We have been clear about our aid effectiveness strategy. All projects funded by CIDA, whether through geographic, multilateral or partnership programs, have been assessed against these standards, and after completing due diligence, CIDA makes the decisions on what projects proceed and what projects do not.

CIDA receives many applications. The agency cannot possibly fund every program for which they receive an application. That is why the minister has been up front and direct in clearly outlining Canada's policy, whether it is with regard to untying food aid or putting money directly into the country's most at need. We have significantly increased our contribution dollars, especially in Africa, but in other countries as well.

It is a different policy than was followed by the previous government, but it is the policy of this government. It is working. CIDA officials are ensuring that the hard-earned Canadian tax dollars allocated to these programs are getting down to the level where these dollars are needed, and that is very poor people and those included in the maternal health issue. The dollars are flowing to those people, rather than being distributed as they were before, with no sense at all of whether the money even got close to the people who most needed it.

**Senator Tardif:** Honourable senators, the issue is one of lack of consultation. The act requires that there be consultation; there was no consultation.

The report also found that CIDA's "do-no-harm" approach to human rights was minimalist, inadequate and offered a narrow approach to human rights obligations under the act. For its programs to be consistent with international human rights standards, the agency should be able to demonstrate that it can reasonably expect to do no harm. Merely stating that the agency meets its human rights obligations does not provide the Canadian public with how its programs and strategies go about meeting them.

What measures will be taken by the government to ensure that all ministers and agencies set exemplary standards on the aid reporting and implementation fronts?

**Senator LeBreton:** As a government, we are reporting to Canadians that we are managing their hard-earned tax dollars that we contribute in aid. As I have pointed out before, Canadians want results. They want to know that their tax dollars are making a difference. The honourable senator disagrees, but our plan includes focused bilateral aid on 20 countries; shifting more resources and authorities to the field, which is where it should be; establishing priority themes such as food security, children and youth, and economic growth; and, as I have mentioned before, completely untying all aid by 2013. As honourable senators also know, all food aid is untied.

At the United Nations recently, the Prime Minister announced our new commitment of \$540 million over three years to The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The global fund directs approximately 61 per cent of its resources towards HIV/AIDS, 24 per cent toward the prevention and treatment of malaria and 15 per cent to tuberculosis programming.

We are committed as a government and are proud of the commitment of doubling our aid to Africa in 2008-09, a full year ahead of the original commitment target, and Africa receives 67 per cent of our food aid.

The Canadian-led “Initiative to Save a Million Lives,” launched by the Prime Minister in Africa in 2007, has trained 20,000 health workers and distributed 640,000 insecticide-treated bed nets. As well, about 80 per cent of the funding in the maternal and child care initiative will go to sub-Saharan Africa.

The honourable senator may have a different political or policy view. We happen to believe that as the government we have a responsibility to these nations and to the Canadian taxpayer, and I believe that the government is on the right track. We have been told by many countries that our significant efforts are indeed working.

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