



March 9, 2005

Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

As a Canadian non-governmental organization (NGO) that helps alleviate the impact of poverty for children in Canada and some of the poorest countries in the world, Canadian Feed The Children (CFTC) is disheartened and angered by a recent announcement from Jennifer Benimadhu, Vice-President, Canadian Partnership Branch, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In her February 22, 2005 announcement, the V-P states that CIDA is deferring the launch of the call for proposals for the NGO Project Facility Fund and Sustainable Development Program while these programs are being evaluated. As a responsible and effective player in international development, CFTC is acutely aware of how important evaluation is in all aspects of programming. However, as a charity that has used these funds to support children and families in dire circumstances around the world, and is painfully aware of the great and continued need for further funding, CFTC is concerned that this deferment is the first aggressive step toward the funds' demise.

Further implication of this direction is the V-P's statement that, "We continue to encourage organizations to diversify their sources of funding." This is sage advice for all third-sector organizations, but not to the full exclusion of government resources.

Individual Canadians should continue to expect that their personal contributions to foreign aid through their support of NGOs will be reflected exponentially by the government that represents them on the world stage.

In trusting CFTC to use their money to help children in developing countries, Canadians demonstrate their desire, their responsibility and their right to reach out to those living in difficult circumstances. They know that, for the world to change for the better we must act, and this announcement by CIDA is an affront to those who care enough to do so.

Canadian Feed The Children has benefited over the years from matching CIDA funding for development projects in Europe, the Caribbean and West Africa. In the last three years, we have seen a decrease in CIDA program funding from 12.5% to 2.65% of our total operating revenue. We are proud of our record of consistently directing over 80% of our resources toward programming and pleased that we have been able to continue our work with less government funding and more from the Canadian public.

Canadian Feed The Children will continue to serve those who struggle to survive with little or no support from their own governments. In many cases, children are alive today because we, like so many vital NGOs, were working with their community to provide medicine, a doctor's care, a clean water source or a sustainable way to access food. When CIDA plays the funding role it should through Canadian NGOs, the number of saved lives simply grows, as it should.

We implore your government, Mr. Martin, to investigate the dangerous direction CIDA appears to be taking. On behalf of the children we serve in developing countries, and the Canadians who expect this service to continue, we look forward to a change of heart and a subsequent change of policy by CIDA to ensure funding continues to NGOs across the country continues, at least until the aching need subsides.

Sincerely,

Jim Dahl
Executive Director, on behalf of the Board of Directors