

*A Liberal Senator calls for
an end to the criminalization
of Canada's sex trade*

ISSUES &

*Even with the boost announced on Wednesday,
Canada's foreign-aid budget falls billions short*

The 0.7% solution

JOHN W. McARTHUR

While Canada is unpacking the contents of Wednesday's federal budget, a broader — but related — global drama is playing out on the world stage. By the time this drama is resolved, 2005 may have established itself as the most important year for the international system since the Second World War.

This coming September, the world's heads of state and government will meet for a special summit at the United Nations, where they will review the organizing principles of the world's intergovernmental architecture, and set a course for the next generation.

Under discussion are the United Nations charter, including the composition of the Security Council; international standards for fighting and defining terrorism; and — closer to home — the practical steps needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the targets set five years ago by member states to help developing countries halve extreme poverty by 2015. Last week's pre-budget statement by Gilles Duceppe, Stephen Harper and Jack Layton calling for the Canadian government to follow through on existing aid commitments comes at a crucial time.

In 1969, an international commission led by former prime minister Lester B. Pearson concluded that governments should aim to set aside at least 0.7% of their nation's GDP for official development assistance (ODA) to poorer countries. This standard was affirmed by the UN General Assembly in 1970 and has been reaffirmed several times since.

For many years, the 0.7% target was seen by many as an admirable but unattainable aspiration. So far, only five countries have reached the target: Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

However, at a major global conference in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002, a new international framework was set for financing economic development in the poorest countries. Canada joined the other signatories and again urged the fulfillment of the 0.7% target.

Since then, a global consensus for action has been emerging, with six more countries — Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom — setting a timetable to reach 0.7% before 2015. The German government is considering a similar timetable, with a pan-European development initiative now looking likely, based on a common commitment to achieving 0.7% by 2015.

Last month, the UN Millennium Project, an independent advisory body comprised of nearly 300 of the



Maria Madonsela of South Africa with a net that helps her ward off malaria-infected mosquitoes. Such nets have been identified by the UN Millennium Project as a cheap and effective way of saving lives in the Third World.

ALEXANDER JOE / AFP PHOTO

world's leading scientists, agronomists, economists, engineers and other development practitioners, released a comprehensive study on the investments needed to halve extreme poverty around the world. After nearly three years of rigorous research, the Project found that the poorest countries can achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) if the rich countries follow through on their 0.7% commitment.

Furthermore, the Project identified many well-governed but poor coun-

tries that could make excellent use of increased development assistance — for example by buying malaria bednets, hiring nurses, ensuring that poor children are in school, protecting the environment and building vital infrastructure for long-term, private-sector-led growth.

Developed economies have grown so rich that they are now able, for the first time, to halve extreme poverty within a decade and end it within a generation. But these great global goals can work only if all developed

countries contribute their fair share. While the nations of Europe now seem poised to follow through on their 0.7% promises, others are not. Unfortunately, that includes Canada — notwithstanding the title of this week's budget, *Delivering on Commitments*.

How much is Canada actually contributing? As of 2002, at the time of the Monterrey conference, Canadian ODA was only 0.28% of national income, barely one-third of the 0.7% standard. Canada has since been increasing ODA gradually, but not by anywhere near enough to reach 0.7% by 2015. As of 2004, ODA was still less than 0.3% of GDP.

The 2005 budget figures follow a similar trend: Although the government is hailing its plan to spread a \$2.9-billion increase in ODA over the next five years, the shortfall to 0.7% is roughly \$5-billion this year alone.

Amazingly, some Ottawa policy makers have argued that Canada's commitment to 0.7% is unrealistic because the economy is growing too fast, so making good on the necessary commitment would be too expensive in absolute terms. This bizarre logic amounts to saying: "We are getting rich too fast to meet our commitments for the poorest people on the planet."

If rich nations such as Canada fail to fulfill the 0.7% promise, there will be consequences. Mass suffering and early death will remain tragically common in large swathes of Africa and Asia. Global security will be imperiled by the continuing collapses of "failed states" under the weight of extreme poverty, hunger and disease.

Donor countries that fail to follow through on their 0.7% commitments are likely to experience political costs as well. Some high-income countries such as Germany and Japan are seeking permanent membership on the UN Security Council; Canada, for its part, is seeking to lead a new L20 group of developing and developed countries. Yet many poor countries are asking why they should accept the leadership of rich nations if those nations consistently fail to follow through on their long-standing international commitments.

Setting a Canadian timetable for reaching the 0.7% target would go a long way toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction. It would also burnish Canada's reputation as a champion of multilateralism and humane internationalism. It's time to show the world what "delivering on commitments" really means.

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John W. McArthur is the manager of the UN Millennium Project, an independent advisory body to the UN Secretary-General. The project's final report is available at www.unmillenniumproject.org

Israel's chain-link peacemaker

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
in Washington

On Sunday, Feb. 20, Israel crossed two Rubicons. The Cabinet decided once and for all to withdraw from Gaza and dismantle 25 settlements — 21 in Gaza and four in the upper West Bank. Yet, had Israel done only this, it would be seen, correctly, as a victory for terror, a unilateral retreat and surrender to the four-year intifada. That is why the second Israeli decision was so important. The Cabinet also voted to finish the security fence on the West Bank, which will separate Israeli and Palestinian populations, and create the initial border between Israel and a nascent Palestine.

The fence decision makes clear that the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza is only part of a larger strategy, the first serious strategic idea Israel has had since its period of utter confusion and demoralization at the beginning of the 2000 intifada. The idea is this: Israel must (unilaterally, if necessary) rationalize its defensive lines — in order to (1) protect its citizens, (2) permanently defuse the Palestinian terror threat and thus (3) open the door to a final peace.

Evacuating Gaza and completing the fence are complementary parts of that strategy. Both Gaza and the northern West Bank are separated from Israel by fences. Not a single suicide bomber has ever infiltrated through them. As a result, northern Israel enjoys calm.

But in Gaza, which is also surrounded by a fence, the bloodshed has continued. Why? Because 8,200 Jews are living on the wrong side of the fence. Defending them involves enormous Israeli military deployments, great danger and no real return. Everyone knows that ultimately this island of Jews in a sea of a million Arabs will have to go.

Once Israel leaves Gaza, and once the rest of the West Bank fence is completed, the Israeli and Palestinian populations will be almost perfectly divided in their own territories as defined by this temporary frontier. The fence approved by the Cabinet last Sunday leaves perhaps 1% of Israelis on the wrong (Palestinian) side of the fence and perhaps 0.4 percent of Palestinians on the wrong (Israeli) side of the fence. (These figures, cal-

THE FENCE CREATES

A STABLE STATUS QUO WITH A MINIMAL LEVEL OF VIOLENCE

culated by Middle East expert David Makovsky, exclude polyglot Jerusalem.)

This defensive barrier separating the two populations will not only prevent suicide bombers from killing hundreds of innocent civilians. It will change the entire strategic equation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The terror weapon that the Palestinians have brandished in the past — and will surely brandish again at every turn in negotiations when their maximal demands go unmet — will disappear.

Sure, there could be random terror attacks. But that is true of Spain and Indonesia and much of the world today. What changes with the Gaza withdrawal and the fence is that terrorism as a reliable weapon, a constant threat, a strategic asset, ceases to exist.

And once that terror option is removed, the Palestinians will in time be forced to the collective conclusion that the world has been awaiting for 57 years — that they cannot drive the Jews into the sea and must therefore negotiate a compromise for a permanent peace.

That day may not come immediately. The beauty of the withdrawal/fence plan is that, in the interim, it creates a stable status quo with a minimal level of violence. In that interim, Israel can live in peace and the Palestinians can develop the institutions of their state and begin to contemplate a final end to the conflict.

Why did Ariel Sharon do this? Did the father of the settlement movement go soft? Defeatist? No. The Israeli right has grown up and given up the false dream of Greater Israel encompassing the Palestinian territories. And the Israeli left has grown up too, being mugged by the intifada into understanding that you do not trust the lives of your children to the word of an enemy bent on your destruction.

For now, you trust only the defensive fence and the deterrent power of the Israeli army. Sharon is no dreamer like Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, who bargained away land for a piece of paper. Sharon, like any good general — and he was a great general — is giving up land for a stable defensive line.

Everyone wants peace, but Sharon's real obsession is terror. From his days as a young commando in the 1950s, he has been a fanatic about fighting terrorism. Take away the terror weapon and everything else follows: safety, stability and the conditions for a final peace. A peace based not on the good will of a Sharon or a Mahmoud Abbas but on the new reality on the ground: separate nations delineated by a temporary barrier to produce a temporary peace — and the possibility of a final one.

Washington Post Writers Group

Don't make outlaws out of prostitutes

MAC HARB

For many years, I have advocated the reform of Canadian laws that criminalize sex trade workers. These laws force prostitutes underground and expose them to serious health and security risks that would be unacceptable in any other profession. As a Member of Parliament, I introduced a private member's bill in 2000 that would allow municipalities to license places of business where prostitutes may legally perform their trade.

Unfortunately, it is an issue that even the most well-meaning of citizens and politicians tend to shy away from. Because of the stigma surrounding the sex trade, my proposals have often met with indignation or, worse, indifference.

While the issue is controversial, there is one undeniable truth: Despite overlapping layers of legislation at the municipal, provincial and federal levels that aim to end the sex trade, or at least put it out of sight, prostitution is alive and flourishing in our country.

Unfortunately, many sex trade workers are not doing as well.

Prostitution — that is, the exchange of sex for money — is legal in Canada. However, virtually all the activities asso-

ciated with it — solicitation, procurement and keeping a "bawdy house," for instance — are against the law, as set out in the Criminal Code. These associated activities are essential to the trade of prostitution and "street sweeping" legislation has failed to stop them.

To the relief of many, the House of Commons has recently created a subcommittee to review laws against solicitation, in part due to the recent deaths of more than 50 sex trade workers in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. I believe this subcommittee will discover what is already common knowledge among experts in this area: The current legislation has not only been ineffective in reducing prostitution, it has resulted in an increased number of murders and assaults among sex trade workers.

Because prostitutes inevitably involve themselves in illegal activities, they fear the police, and so rely on dangerous and exploitative pimps for their protection. For the same reason, prostitutes try to minimize their public contact with potential customers. This means they will typically jump into a potential client's car before they can make a determination whether or not he is a threat to them. And since prostitutes aren't regulated, like other professions, there is no mechanism for the

government to systematically screen them for venereal diseases.

It is time to fix all this. New Zealand, Australia and the Netherlands have legalized prostitution. In our own country, there have been numerous studies relating to prostitution done by governments at all levels over the past two decades, with more than 20 internal studies done by the federal Justice Department alone. Collectively, they suggest it is time for reform.

My proposal would help improve public health. In countries where HIV/AIDS pandemics are raging, calls for reform are underscored by statistics that show many commercial sex workers have been infected with the virus. Legalizing prostitution is a way to help health professionals support prostitutes, and provide them with the means to protect themselves.

Under a legalized regime, prostitution would be treated as a legitimate occupation, but it would be controlled by a set of rules that would govern who can work and under what circumstances they would be able to do so. In countries where legalization has already been put in place, governments regulate the trade through work permits and tolerance zones (also known as red-light districts). Of course, there are elements of the

sex trade that would need to remain criminal, including pimping and child prostitution. But these criminal laws would be easier to enforce than at present because most prostitutes and clients alike will prefer to work in the legal sector.

If Canada were to legalize prostitution, individual municipalities would be able to decide on a case by case basis whether to allow red light districts or bawdy houses. Such a system of legal prostitution exists in other jurisdictions, notably in Amsterdam, where red-light areas are supervised, improving the health and safety of prostitutes and their clients.

The vast majority of workers in the sex trade are afflicted by poverty, drugs and violence. It is imperative that we continue to address the underlying socio-economic conditions that lead women to prostitution, while helping to support those who have already entered the profession. But legalization must be part of our strategy, as well: We can no longer drag our feet on reforms that would improve the lives of Canada's most marginalized workers.

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Mac Harb is a Liberal member of the Canadian Senate.