



Amnesty International  
Canada Section



Canadian Conference  
of Catholic Bishops



Canadian Council for  
International Co-operation



Canadian Council  
of Refugees



Canadian Labour Congress



David Suzuki Foundation

**Équiterre**



Rights & Democracy



April 26, 2004

The Right Honourable Paul Martin  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

In its Speech from the Throne, the federal government announced that an International Policy Review “will be completed this autumn and then considered by a parliamentary committee, where Canadians will have the opportunity to make their views known.”

While the government plays the leadership role in developing options and proposals for consideration by a parliamentary committee, we nevertheless urge the government to make space for the contributions of civil society organizations in the early days of the Review. By taking advantage of our community’s expertise, the government can enrich the policy options before they are presented to Canadians through the parliamentary process. Once these options are developed, it will be crucial for the government to integrate extensive public consultations into the Review process in the fall.

The importance of involving Canadians in this process cannot be overstated. One of the key objectives of the Review is to achieve broad support for an integrated, interdepartmental vision of foreign policy, development, foreign aid, defence and trade. This is a laudable goal, but one we believe can only be achieved if Canadians clearly understand the options available, and are given the opportunity to deliberate these choices. To that end, we recommend the following guidelines for consulting Canadians:

- **Timely** Public involvement in the Review should start early, before decisions are made.
- **Inclusive** It should include both civil society organizations and individual citizens.
- **In-depth** It should allow for the public to consider real options not already decided directions. This would also include a transparent process for assessing the pros and cons of implementing proposals from government and other policy experts.
- **Meaningful** It should provide opportunities for Canadians to influence the policy directions that emerge from the Review.

These guidelines echo the principles in the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* (2001), including the commitment by the government to “recognize its need to engage the voluntary sector in open, informed and sustained dialogue in order that the sector may contribute its experience, expertise, knowledge, and ideas in developing better public policies and in the design and delivery of programs.”

We recognize that the 2003 Dialogue on Foreign Policy, and the 2002 Defence Review, involved public consultation. However, we urge the government to envision these previous consultations as the first—and not final—steps of engaging Canadians in the International Policy Review process. As Foreign Minister Bill Graham noted in his report on the Dialogue: “...the widespread engagement in town halls, on the Web site and in written submissions reaffirmed for me how strongly Canadians believe that direct citizen involvement must remain central to sound government, in the making of our country’s foreign policy as well as in the reform and renewal of multilateral forms of government.” Again, to “remain central to sound government,” dialogue needs to be open, informed and—above all—sustained.

The Dialogue on Foreign Policy demonstrated that Canadians support an international role for Canada that reflects our values of pluralism, multilateralism, social activism, democracy, environmental protection and support for human rights. These values should be considered as drivers of Canadian international policy and applied coherently. Voluntary sector expertise, as well as informed citizen participation, in the Review process will contribute to setting a bold new vision for Canada’s role in the world. The more the government has the backing of Canadians, the stronger it will be on the international stage.

On behalf of our respective constituencies and as individual citizens, we are prepared to help ensure the 2004 Review is an inclusive and effective process.

Sincerely,



Alex Neve, Secretary General  
**Amnesty International, Canada Section**



Nick Summers, President,  
**Canadian Council of Refugees**



Most Rev. Blaise E. Morand, Chairman  
Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs  
**Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops**



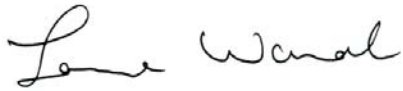
Ken Georgetti, President  
**Canadian Labour Congress**



Gerry Barr  
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Co-operation**



Jim Fulton, Executive Director  
**David Suzuki Foundation**



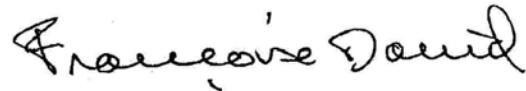
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Elizabeth May, Executive Director  
**Sierra Club of Canada**



Professor John C. Polanyi  
**1986 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry**

cc.: The Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Finance  
The Honourable Jim Peterson, Minister of International Trade  
The Honourable Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
The Honourable David Pratt, Minister of National Defence  
The Honourable Liza Frulla, Minister of Social Development  
The Honourable Aileen Carroll, Minister for International Cooperation