



CANADIAN COUNCIL ON AFRICA

OPENING DOORS



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Lucien Bradet explains how the Canadian Council on Africa is working to change negative perceptions of the continent, support investment into Africa, and ensure that knowledge and skills are transferred with it



In the western world there is still a huge gap between the public perception of Africa as a place to work and do business, and the actual reality. The media often has an unfortunate habit of blurring the distinctions between regions, states and regimes and tarring everyone with the actions of a few. Even a small issue, according to Lucien Bradet, president and CEO of the Canadian Council on Africa, is portrayed as a large issue affecting the entire continent. “This is unfortunate because it reinforces the idea that Africa is not a good place to do business,” Bradet said. In reality it’s developing rapidly, with enormous resources and a huge potential for business investment.

“My mission,” he continued, “is to change that negative perception, provide Canadian businesses and organisations with information about the current business environment, the opportunities in Africa, and to open doors that they would not be able to open for themselves.”

This year the Canadian Council on Africa celebrates its 10th anniversary, and during that time it has done much to strengthen the economic ties between Canada and Africa. Created in 2002 following the G8 summit in Alberta, the Council has taken its place as a highly respected independent not-for-profit organisation promoting the economic growth of Africa. Firstly it paves the way for Canadian investment into the continent. Secondly – and perhaps more importantly – it promotes the transfer of knowledge that will enable the economies of Africa to continue growing long after the



Mohamed Kalif, Director, Private Sector Department, speaks to delegates at the Financial Institutions Conference in Montreal

Canadian companies have left. As Bradet says, the benefit goes both ways. “And in today’s world, that is a definite win-win.”

Funded purely by its members and by the events it runs, the Council operates from four small offices located in Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa. “And we do miracles with just a small staff of seven people,” Bradet said. “Each of them has deep roots in Africa and understands it very well.” Bradet himself is a graduate of the University of Rwanda, while the council’s vice president in Toronto was originally from the

Democratic Republic of Congo.

The council organises and manages a wide range of events and services each year including conferences, seminars, missions to Africa, information gathering and dissemination, research and political lobbying. Conferences are generally

themed, and bring together leaders, businessmen and organisations from Africa, linking them with Canadian business, economists and lending agencies. Through a combination of presentations, discussions and networking sessions, members are able to explore

129

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Number of Canadian mining companies operating in Africa

“WE WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH THE CANADIAN EMBASSIES IN AFRICA AND WITH ALL THE AFRICAN EMBASSIES IN CANADA”

growth opportunities in Africa and discover how to take advantage of them.

Already this year, the Exploring New Frontiers Conference has taken place in Vancouver while the Financial Institutions Conference was held in Montreal. Coming up soon is the 2012 Africa Energy Forum in Calgary, which is timed to precede the Global Petroleum Show.

On a smaller scale, the Council arranges a large number of individual seminars and workshops generally for around 70 delegates. The events are then held in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal.

The Council plays a vital role in opening doors for Canadian companies and introducing them directly to the relevant people in Africa. “We organise four missions to Africa each year,” Bradet explained, “and they are time consuming and complex to arrange. We aim to take 15 delegates to Africa for three or four days, lay on a number of seminars for them and schedule meetings specifically to address their needs and interests.” Last year, missions went to Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso, and this year the destinations include Nigeria, Angola and South Africa.

Just as important for Canadian companies operating in Africa is accurate business and market intelligence. The Council continuously gathers information about the business opportunities in Africa and collates this into business sectors such as education, health, engineering and so on. “We publish about 1700 opportunities a year across every field of business. Through the year we publish information from every African country, some more so than others.” As a

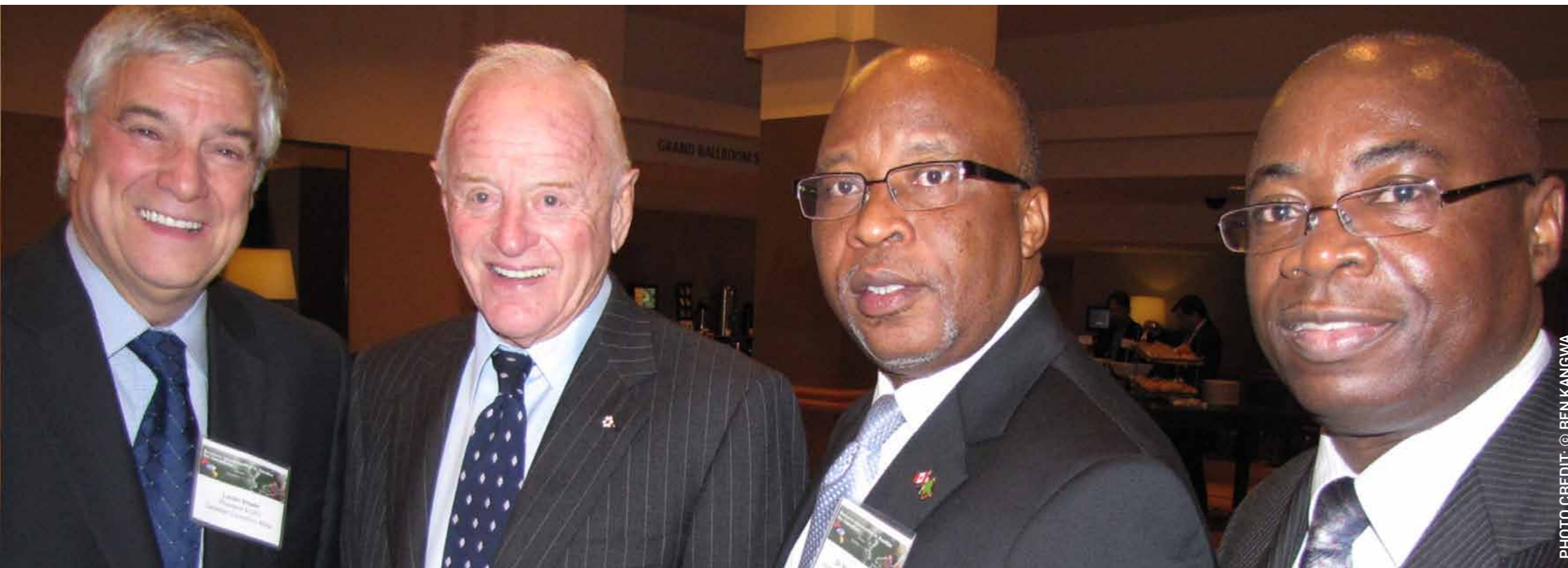


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Left to right: Lucien Bradet, Peter Munk, founder and chairman of Barrick Gold, His Excellency Dr. Nevers Mumba, Zambian High Commissioner to Canada, Nola Kianza, Vice President of CCAfrica, Ontario

supplement to this, there is a daily business news bulletin about Africa. “The point about both these publications is to show that Africa is a vibrant continent,” Bradet said. “There are plenty of opportunities to do business there, make investments, provide training and so on. All of this is feasible and practical – and you can be successful.”

Providing such a diverse range of services requires an extensive network of contacts and information sources, and this has been built up over the course of the past 10 years. “Our network of knowledge is very extensive,” Bradet said. “We work very closely with the Canadian embassies in Africa and with all the African embassies in Canada, with the high commissions and with respondent companies and organisations in Africa, and we have the reputation for being a serious organisation. So when we organise an event we’re able to open doors very rapidly, ones that an individual organisation wouldn’t be able to open alone.”

Taking a look at the success stories of recent years amply illustrates this. If you asked most people to name Canadian companies operating in Africa they would name big mining companies like Rio Tinto Alcan and Barrick Gold. But there are in fact 129 Canadian mining companies



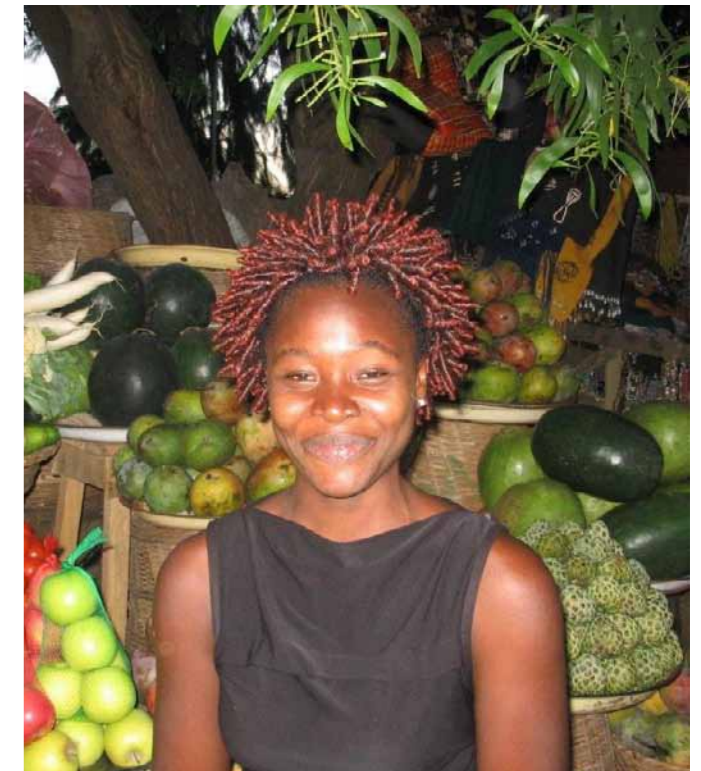
The port of Dar es Salaam

operating in Africa, ranging in size from the large global corporations through to small juniors, engaging in all activities from exploration and development to full scale mining. The investment into the industry has been significant. “At this point in time, Canadian investment in African mining is valued at around \$26 billion,” said Bradet. “We calculate there are about 30,000 jobs created in Africa through this investment. And when you consider that mining jobs are

considered to be among the best paid jobs, that is very good for the economy.”

Mining, however, is just one aspect of Canadian involvement in Africa. “Aside from mining the biggest contribution from Canadian companies is in the service areas, and this is a knowledge-based industry.” CPCS Transcom, for example, has been helping many of the African states privatise and regenerate their infrastructure as well as improve their management capabilities. “They have worked in many countries, including the privatisation of the ports of Dar es Salaam and Lagos, and they’re now working on the privatisation of power generation in Nigeria.”

Sogema CRC has installed new taxation systems into seven countries so far while the global engineering company SNC



Desjardins supports development of microfinance

Lavalin has completed projects in 53 countries across the continent. Meanwhile, Développement International Desjardins, a pioneer and world leader in the deployment and development of microfinance, is sharing both knowledge and systems to improve community finance.

“What I like about these knowledge-based businesses is that they don’t come back on the plane with their knowledge, they leave it there,” Bradet said. This dissemination of knowledge is an integral part of the emergence of Africa as an upcoming business destination. **BE**

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For more information about Canadian Council on Africa visit: www.ccafrica.ca



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