

Contact: Lourdes Cué  
[Lcue@miami.edu](mailto:Lcue@miami.edu)  
305-284-1607  
September 10, 2002

## **STUDY BY FORMER CANADIAN DIPLOMAT TAKES ON CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT POLICY TOWARD CUBA**

CORAL GABLES, FL – In a paper just published by the **University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (ICCAS)**, former **Canadian Ambassador Michael Bell** offers a thought provoking critical assessment of Canada's policy of engagement toward Cuba. ***Back to the Future? Canada's Experience with Constructive Engagement in Cuba*** examines the Canadian government's unsuccessful efforts to foster peaceful societal transformation, representative institutions and respect for human rights.

Bell has served as ambassador to Russia, the Netherlands, Peru and Bolivia, as well as Assistant Deputy Minister for Latin America and the Caribbean in Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Policy during a diplomatic career that spans three decades. He is currently at Justice Solutions, a research institution in Ontario, Canada, specializing in diplomacy and human rights.

The thirty-page paper, which was co-authored by researchers Eugene Rothman, Marvin Schiff and Christopher Walker of Justice Solutions, includes a brief history of Canada's relations with Cuba, an overview of the development of constructive engagement and an analysis of current policy. The authors trace the present policy to the Liberal Party's rise to power in 1993 under Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

"Six months after taking office, the new Liberal foreign minister, Andre Ouellet instructed his department to take a more positive position in the development of relations with Cuba," writes Bell. "Canada increased its development assistance budget and signaled its desire to become more engaged through high level visits, through more public questioning of Washington's Cuba policy, through its vote on the UN embargo resolution and in the Prime Minister's comments at the Summit of the Americas."

-- more --

The paper goes on to examine the “ambivalence towards constructive engagement” of Canadian diplomats who deal or have dealt with Cuba. “Some conclude that it does not work. Others paraphrase Winston Churchill and suggest that it is the worst policy except for all the rest.”

Bell and his co-authors outline some of the variables that have helped shape Canada’s policy - Canadian-American relations, human rights and trade. On this last factor, they write:

Ensuring a stable market for Canadian goods was likely a contributing factor in the initial decision to recognize the Castro government. However small the trade between Canada and Cuba is, in relative terms, its continued flow, primarily in nickel and tourism, is clearly enhanced by the policy of constructive engagement.

The authors conclude that a policy which incorporates aspects of both the Canadian and U.S. policy could be more effective in engendering greater respect for human rights and an eventual peaceful transition.

The study comes as the U.S. Congress considers legislation to end the travel ban and other sanctions. The President has said he will veto any such legislation.

Since it was established in 1999, the University of Miami’s Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (ICCAS) has become a major national and international center for the study and dissemination of Cuban history and culture. ICCAS serves as an academic center for research and study of Cuban, Cuban-American and U.S.- Cuba topics. It is also engaged in the study of issues and problems of Cuba’s transition. To visit ICCAS online go to <http://www.miami.edu/iccas/>.

For more information on ICCAS or a copy of the paper, contact 305-284-2822 or [ccas@miami.edu](mailto:ccas@miami.edu).

###