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Export date: Fri Oct 30 18:02:57 2026 / +0000 GMT

Who?s paying for this?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

If you have ever had nieces and nephews, you probably had a lot of fun giving them gifts when they were growing up.

I really enjoyed watching their faces light up when they received something they really liked.

When they were really young, a toy of some sort usually made them happy.

As they get older, gift-giving becomes a bit of a challenge. It's hard to figure out what to give a 12-year-old girl or a 14-year-old boy. Their version of what is cool just won't be the same as yours, and a brand-spanking new package of tube socks just won't cut it.

This is when you usually start giving cash in a greeting card. The kid gets to buy something they really want, and you avoid the agony of figuring out what a teenager would like.

My own suggestion to them was to put it in the bank, and over the course of saving from an early age, someday they could be the proud owner of a Chevy Corvette.

However, there comes a time when giving a niece or nephew an envelope with cash just sort of goes away. It would be awkward to give a grown man or woman an envelope with cash and tell them to buy something nice, especially when they now make more money than you do.

They are self-sufficient and have hopefully learned the value of a dollar and use their income appropriately.

I think the same way of thinking should be applied to foreign aid ? the billions of dollars we give to other countries who have been ?developing' for close to 100 years.

Canada and other nations have been pumping billions of dollars into African countries and other countries around the world for decades, and they still want more.

Many, if not all, African countries have abundant resources available, and that could create a lot of wealth and jobs. However, they have leaders who are either unwilling or unable to capitalize on what is available in their own backyard.

That, along with the corruption that exists and the skimming of funds, means the financial aid never really does what it is supposed to do.

It is also frustrating to constantly receive solicitations from big charity agencies that claim $2 a day, less than you spend on a coffee every morning, will apparently feed some kid and his family for a week.

I would have no problem helping feed poor children in a foreign country if I really thought it would help. But then I see the salaries of the executives who run these international charities, and I know my $2 is really going to help pay for marina fees for someone's new yacht.

Canada spent around $8 billion on foreign aid in 2023. A large part of that, around $1.5 billion, was spent domestically to support refugees, asylum claimants, and Ukrainians who fled the Russian invasion.

At the same time, the local hospital where I live is trying to raise $80 million to build a new hospital. Government funding does not pay for new hospitals in Canada.

That money must be raised by local citizens and businesses.

At the same time, Canadian citizens are working hard to raise money to build a hospital, foreign aid drops millions into other countries to support healthcare for free.

The old theory of ?teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime,' just isn't working.

Helping a neighbour in times of need is something we should all do.

If you had a new neighbour who asked you for help because he just got a new lawnmower, but he can't afford the gas, has no idea how to operate it, and has no concept of small engines, you would likely show him how to start the mower and cut the grass. You might cut it for him just so you don't have a neighbour with an unsightly, overgrown yard next to your property. You might also take the gas can to the local gas station and put in $2 worth of gas to help him out.

However, if ten years in a row he shows up at your door in the spring, telling you he has no money for gas, and has no idea how to start the lawnmower, your likely response would be ?Get a job and figure it out.'

It's time for many of these countries to step up, grow up, and find their own way rather than always standing with a hand out and expecting the West to pay.