

Canadian lawyer shortlisted for international court's top job October 26, 2011

Robert Petit, the Canadian Justice Department's top specialist on war crimes, has been shortlisted as one of four candidates to replace Luis Moreno-Ocampo as chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court — the top war-crimes tribunal.

During his 22-year career, Petit has specialized in international criminal law and criminal prosecution.

He has worked for the past decade at the Justice Canada in the crimes against humanity and war crimes section. There, he provides legal advice to RCMP and police teams investigating persons currently in Canada, suspected of having committed violations of international humanitarian law and international criminal law in various countries.

From 1996 to 1999, he worked for the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, supervising investigations, indictments and prosecutions of numerous perpetrators of crimes committed during the Rwandan genocide.

Petit has held various positions at the UN, prosecuting cases from Kosovo to Sierra Leone, Cambodia and East Timor, according to his LinkedIn online biography.

He received his law degree from the Universite de Montreal.

He is one of four candidates for the international court's top job — and not necessarily the most likely to receive it.

The list also includes Fatou Bensouda, a Gambian and current deputy prosecutor at the court, who is considered one of the favourites for the post, according to diplomats.

It also includes Mohamed Chande Othman, chief justice of Tanzania, and Britains' Andrew Cayley, co-prosecutor in the Cambodian special court handling Khmer Rouge trials.

The list was released this week by the Assembly of States Parties which oversees the international court.

With so much of the ICC work focused on Africa, there is mounting international pressure for an African to become the public face of the court's work.

The election for the prosecutor is to be held at the UN headquarters in December and the successful candidate will take over from Moreno-Ocampo in June 2012.