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NEWS RELEASE

“I Am Canadian” Challenging Stereotypes about Young Somali Canadians

Montreal – A new study published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy challenges the perception that the Somali Canadian community has failed to integrate into the wider society. Instead, its author, Rima Berns-McGown, finds that many young Somali Canadians have a strong attachment to Canada that is often accompanied by identification with Islam and with Somalia.

In her study [*“I Am Canadian”: Challenging Stereotypes about Young Somali Canadians*](#), Berns-McGown also reports that her in-depth interviews with young Somali Canadians demonstrated no widespread or significant support for the al-Shabaab movement in southern Somalia or any other organization that might threaten the public safety of Canadians.

Berns-McGown, who teaches diaspora studies at the University of Toronto, highlights some of the significant roadblocks young Somali Canadians often encounter, including the trauma that they and/or their families experienced in Somalia before leaving, racism in school and on the part of the police, and negative media coverage.

According to Berns-McGown, “social cohesion would be much better served if we addressed the specific challenges Somali Canadians continue to face, rather than stigmatizing the community and contributing to the criminalization of its youth.”

To that end, the author offers a number of proposals for school boards, law enforcement agencies, federal and provincial governments, and the media, such as targeted support for Somali Canadian youth and ways to address institutional barriers and stereotyping. “These measures could enhance Somali Canadians’ inclusion in the wider society and foster a balanced approach to public safety issues,” concludes Berns-McGown.

[*“I Am Canadian”: Challenging Stereotypes about Young Somali Canadians*](#), by Rima Berns-McGown, can be downloaded free of charge from the Institute’s Web site (www.irpp.org).

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