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NEWS RELEASE

## *It's Time to Put the "Social" back in the "Social Union"*

**Montreal** – During the last ten years, the province of Quebec has introduced many innovations that have cast it as a laboratory of social policy reform. In that sense, the adoption of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) in 1999 without Quebec was a serious mistake, depriving the rest of Canada of a unique and innovative expertise, says Yves Vaillancourt in a study released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP).

In "Le modèle québécois de politiques sociales et ses interfaces avec l'Union sociale canadienne," Vaillancourt, Professor at the École de travail social de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), examines the Canadian social union from a Quebec perspective, focusing on the social policy dimension and its intergovernmental dimensions.

Dr. Vaillancourt reviews five areas of intervention where Quebec has demonstrated its flair for innovation. According to the author, what distinguishes Quebec in North America is the state's recognition and support of the social economy. Over the last ten years, social policy reforms in that province have shown that a new progressive path characterized by strong elements of solidarity and democracy can be an alternative to the Keynesian model of the post-war era and the neo-liberal model presently in style.

However, Quebec's reforms remain fragile and modest and would benefit from greater exposure to the social innovations developed in the rest of Canada. Concomitantly, governments, individuals and groups in the rest of Canada would stand to improve their own plans for reform by learning from advances taking place in Quebec.

Due to the substance of the Agreement, and the circumstances under which it was concluded, SUFA has had little impact on the evolution of social policy in Canada. In this period of renewal of social policy, it would be in the interest of all governments concerned to find better ways to work together. Canada's social union is an ongoing challenge that must be approached from a new perspective.

"Le modèle québécois de politiques sociales et ses interfaces avec l'Union sociale canadienne," the latest *Policy Matters* paper in IRPP's *Social Union* series, is now available on the Institute's website at <http://www.irpp.org> – To access the document, simply click on the "What's New" icon on the homepage.

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