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NEWS RELEASE

Canada Should Build on Existing Institutions Rather than Seek an Overarching Deal with the US, Says New IRPP Study

“If Canada and the United States Had a Strong Common Institution, it Would Be Located in Washington,” Maintains Author Robert Wolfe

Montreal – In a study published today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP), Robert Wolfe says we do not need a Big Idea to make North American integration work better for the benefit of both Canadians and Americans. In his view, instead of bundling Canada-US relations into one package, Canadians should foster relations through the many North American institutions already in existence.

In the study, entitled “See You in Washington? A Pluralist Perspective on North American Institutions,” Robert Wolfe, a former Canadian diplomat now associate professor in the School of Policy Studies at Queen’s University in Kingston, notes that some Canadians are concerned about the apparent weaknesses of North American institutions, particularly since the events of 9/11. They believe that we should deal with the US by addressing all aspects of our relations with that country in one overarching framework.

But, Wolfe argues, Canadians and Americans have a long history of working successfully together to address the types of economic and security problems that seem preoccupying at any given time. We do not need new common institutions.

Canadians should not be complacent, says Wolfe. Canada-US relations are everyone’s responsibility, not just the prime minister’s. But he suggests that Canadians use the collection of existing tools available to them — whether formal legal agreements or informal ones created in the course of the millions of daily interactions of Canadians and Americans – to foster these relations.

Wolfe reasons that “we need to think of our relations with the United States in terms of hosts of small institutional settings where people can work together to solve problems without invoking state formality.” If we don’t want to see the Americans in Washington alone, we have to talk to them everywhere, he concludes.

“See You in Washington? A Pluralist Perspective on North American Institutions,” is the latest *Choices* study to be released as part of IRPP’s Canada’s Options in North America series. It is now available on-line in Adobe (.pdf) format on the Institute’s Web site (www.irpp.org). Please find the summary attached.

IRPP's Canada's Options in North America research program explores the options and tradeoffs available to Canada, both strategically and with respect to North American integration. Please visit the Institute's Web site for more information regarding this program or to download studies published since it was launched.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact the IRPP.

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Contact:

Sáng Tran-Quang
Media Relations Officer
IRPP

(514) 985-2461
stranquang@irpp.org
www.irpp.org