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NEWS RELEASE

Study Says Canada's Foreign Policy Must Recognize Interdependence of Human Rights and Democracy

Canada's partial approach to human rights in its democracy promotion policies and programs limits the country's potential impact.

***Institute for
Research on
Public Policy***

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Montreal – A new study released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP.org) says any real commitment by Ottawa to promote democracy must acknowledge human rights as a primary motor that can generate and sustain democracy.

Author Nancy Thede (Department of Political Science, UQAM) says that although Canada recognizes that human rights are an essential feature of democracy, its policies and programs are not guided by a strategic understanding of the dynamic relationship underlying this link. This leads to democracy promotion that does not focus sufficiently on human rights.

The author proposes a framework for designing and assessing policies, programs and strategies for democratic, economic and social development. This framework includes three key principles: participation, nondiscrimination and accountability, and four human rights standards: availability, accessibility, appropriateness and adaptability.

One of the key shortcomings of new democracies is the insufficient institutionalization of economic and social rights, the author explains. It follows that for Canada's democracy promotion initiatives to succeed, they must give high priority to the implementation and fulfilment of such rights. Thede highlights how Nordic countries have shown it is possible to give greater support to economic and social rights.

Thede adds that "support for the US position on issues of flagrant human rights abuse, and issues relating to security and the economic agenda, indicate that Canada is backing further and further away from a position that recognizes human rights as an overarching commitment for all states."

"Human Rights and Democracy: Issues for Canadian Policy in Democracy Promotion" is the latest *IRPP Policy Matters* study to be released as part of the Institute's International Democratic Development research program. It is available free of charge, in Adobe (.pdf) format, on the IRPP's Web site, at www.irpp.org.

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

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