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## NEWS RELEASE

### *IRPP Study Examines the Partially Realized Promise of Shared Governance in Canada*

*Despite federal government's claim, it does not share power enough  
with the voluntary sector, says Susan Phillips*

**Montreal** – In Canada, as in other mature democracies, there is a change taking place in the governing process. Governments now seek to involve other actors in activities that they once carried out on their own, such as providing services and developing policy. Notable among the newly involved players participating in shared governance is the voluntary sector. In an effort to clarify these developments, the IRPP is today releasing a study that explores the changing relationship between the state and the voluntary sector in Canada.

Author Susan Phillips (Carleton University) argues that in Canada governing is not as networked or shared as popular conceptions of the philosophy of the Third Way, popularized in Britain, suggest. She contends that there is a distinctly Canadian approach to government-voluntary sector relationships, but that this has developed more in response to outside events than through a conscious desire to support new modes of shared governance.

"Three peculiarly Canadian challenges have placed significant limits on how much power the federal government has been willing to share with voluntary sector actors," says the author.

- ◆ The first is our consuming concern with accountability, which is unlikely to change given the current political landscape in Ottawa. The tightening of accountability requirements in public funding of the voluntary sector has undermined development of the trust-based relationships needed for shared governance.
- ◆ Second, says the author, Canada has not created a climate that allows voluntary sector groups to be real players in governance. We need the enabling legislation and regulations to turn voluntary actors into effective governing partners.
- ◆ Third, the pervasive view that the voluntary sector's primary role is to provide services has meant there is less emphasis on its policy development role. Phillips argues it is now time for the voluntary sector to build its own policy capacity and truly participate in governance.

The author concludes by saying that given today's political climate, where the public is less

trusting of government and government is less able to fix problems on its own, Canada needs more shared governance. The voluntary sector is key in this process, as it can help strengthen relationships among citizens and between citizens and the state.

“The Intersection of Governance and Citizenship in Canada: Not Quite the Third Way,” by Susan Phillips, can be downloaded free of charge from [www.irpp.org](http://www.irpp.org)

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**Contact:**

Jackson Wightman ([jwightman@irpp.org](mailto:jwightman@irpp.org))

Director of Communications (IRPP)

Office: (514) 985-2461, ext. 324

Cellular: (514) 235-8308