



For immediate release
Wednesday, September 21, 2005

NEWS RELEASE

IRPP Study Says Criteria in Canada's International Policy Statement Are Not Well Suited to Democratization Agenda

Institute for
Research on
Public Policy
Institut de
recherche
en politiques
publiques

Montreal – In a study released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP.org), Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom contends that in order to place a meaningful focus on democracy assistance, Canada must set relevant criteria for its foreign policy guidelines. In this regard, she is critical of the April 2005 International Policy Statement (IPS), arguing that the criteria for choosing countries as development partners are not well suited to a democratization agenda.

The current IPS, which in passing mentions democratization as an area of sectoral focus for the future, concentrates Canada's aid on 25 core "development partners." The countries are chosen according to their level of poverty, their ability to use aid effectively, and the degree to which Canada's presence in the country is strong relative to that of other donors.

Sundstrom, an assistant professor of political science at the University of British Columbia, acknowledges that reducing poverty is an important goal, but adds that "if the government really is serious about democracy as a priority as well, then there should be some reference to democratic potential in the very criteria for choosing development partners."

In Sundstrom's view, "in order to have a distinctive and palpable positive influence on democratization processes, the government needs to concentrate resources on particular countries and strategic themes." She lists several criteria for the selection of democracy partner countries.

Canada should:

- ◆ Commit resources to democracy promotion in countries where it is likely to have a noticeable impact
- ◆ Continue to focus assistance on locations where programs have already begun to show some impact, but where democracy remains significantly impaired, such as Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe
- ◆ Direct democracy assistance to locations where it has strategic security interests

The study also reviews the records of Canadian and several other Western donor countries in promoting democracy, and identifies lessons Canada can learn from these experiences, including the need to:

- ◆ Consciously solicit local opinion in recipient countries about what is needed and appropriate in order to advance democratic norms and behaviour
- ◆ Make careful assessments before deciding on any restructuring of the organizational frameworks that deliver democracy assistance

- ◆ Establish a consultative body of government departments and nongovernmental donors aimed at guiding development policies in the area of good governance
- ◆ Limit assistance to some regional areas of concentration
- ◆ Specialize in thematic sectors where there are gaps in other donors' programs and where Canada has expertise to offer as a result of its national or international experience

In addition, Sundstrom recommends that the donor community in Canada strive to coordinate its democracy assistance and share information more effectively in order to allow donors to specialize, minimize duplication and learn best practices.

"Hard Choices, Good Causes: Exploring Options for Canada's Overseas Democracy Assistance" is the latest *IRPP Policy Matters* study released as part of the Institute's International Democratic Development series. It is available on the IRPP Web site, at www.irpp.org.

-30-

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

To receive the Institute's media advisories and news releases via e-mail, please subscribe to the IRPP e-distribution service by visiting its Web site, at www.irpp.org.

Founded in 1972, the Institute for Research in Public Policy (IRPP.org) is an independent, national, nonprofit organization based in Montreal.

Contact:

Jasmine Sharma (jsharma@irpp.org)
Director of Communications and Public Relations (IRPP.org)
Office: (514) 985-2461, ext. 324, or cellular: (514) 235-8308