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NEWS RELEASE

Canada Can Do More and Better For Democracy Promotion Abroad

***Canadian contribution to democratic development should remain
internationalist and realistic in orientation, study says.***

Montreal – As the long-awaited international policy review expected for this week has yet again been delayed, a new study released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP.org) concludes that Canadians should have a forum to debate whether they want to invest in a renewed and enhanced role in democratic assistance.

The study notes that Canada's endeavours in democracy assistance, while remaining quite limited, have earned international appreciation. "Canada presents a non-threatening moderate face to the world, and, as a pluralist, federalist, multicultural ethnically and linguistically diverse country, offers potentially useful experience on the democratic accommodation of differences," says author Gerald J. Schmitz.

At the same time, the case is being made both within and outside government for Canada to go beyond existing activities to take on a stronger role with a higher, and more visibly Canadian, profile.

Although acknowledging that "Canada could do more and better," Schmitz cautions that even if Canada decides to become a more important player in the field of democracy promotion, "we do not need to reinvent the wheel, and we ought not to spin it faster than carefully thought out policy considerations and resource implications will allow."

The study reviews how democracy promotion became a stated objective of Canadian foreign policy. It also looks at the evolution and expansion of democracy-building concepts, strategies and programs, but highlights how the initial formative agencies and instruments still, by and large, exist today.

"The Past and Potential Role of International Democracy Promotion in Canada's Foreign Policy," is the first *Policy Matters* study to be released as part of a new IRPP series on International Democratic Development. The study is available on-line in Adobe (.pdf) format on the Institute's website at www.irpp.org.

As a backgrounder on the policy issues in this area, you can also download from the Institute's website the *Working Paper* by project director and IRPP senior fellow George Perlin.

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

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

Contact:

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