Public Involvement in Policy-Making – Why, When and How?

March 15, 2002 – A variety of forces are pushing governments to find new ways to involve citizens in the making of policy.

Forces like the speed and complexity of change and the growing diversity of Canadian society demand up-to-date, accurate input from those affected if policies are to be relevant and effective.

As Karen Jackson, Director of CPRN's Public Involvement Program, points out in a recent presentation, governments that seek to involve the public need to refine their approach to suit their target, the depth of involvement, and the stage of the policy process.

The approach will differ depending on whether the target public is citizens, experts or stakeholders. The type of involvement follows a continuum from that of communicating a message, to consultations, to true engagement (deliberative, open-ended and transformative). Finally, the matter of who to involve and how to involve them will also vary depending on the stage of policy-making (whether agenda-setting, problem definition, policy development, implementation or evaluation).

In ***Public Dialogue: When, Why and How?*** , a presentation she made to the Ready, Set, Go Conference, convened by Human Resources Development Canada, January 30 – February 1, 2002, Jackson draws on CPRN's experience with the deepest form of involvement – citizen engagement – to describe the conditions that make it effective.

You can access or download a Powerpoint version of her remarks by clicking here.

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