## Citizen Engagement: An Essential Public Policy Ingredient

**Friday, October 1, 2004** – Citizen engagement has proven itself a mobilizing force for democracy. That in itself is a good argument for embracing it. Yet it is more than that. It is also a key component of effective and sustainable policy development. It is not a substitute for expert input, but it provides the framework of values and the acceptable limits within which the range of feasible policy options must be found.

CPRN's growing experience with citizen engagement has produced a substantial knowledge base. Citizens' dialogues on Canada's future, on health care reform in Canada, on Ontario's budget priorities, and on the management of used nuclear fuel, have all contributed to that base. Each new public dialogue we undertake further informs our practice and reinforces our awareness of the potential for engagement in the policy and political processes.

Judy Watling is the Assistant Director of CPRN's Public Involvement Network, and the lead author of the final report on the Citizens' Dialogue on the management of used nuclear fuel. She draws together many of the lessons from CPRN's dialogue experience in a recent presentation to the Environmental Protection and Resources Conservation Committee of China's National People's Congress.

Watling reviews the definition of engagement, its benefits, the principles of its practice, its application, and its political implications, as well as the challenges facing its wider use. She draws on the results of recent CPRN citizens' dialogues to illustrate her arguments. A major message, common to them all: citizens are keen to participate, have much to contribute in resolving important policy questions, and want to see engagement become customary to their governments' practice.

You can access or download a copy of Judy Watling's presentation, ***Citizen Engagement: For Sustainable Public Policy***, by clicking here.

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