

News Release

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Leadership Summit 2008 Launches Connecting with Canadians

Leadership Summit 2008 launched CPRN's new public policy research program, *Connecting with Canadians*, in Ottawa on February 13. Community, business, government and young leaders from across Canada attended to identify priority issues that Canada must address in order to respond to the key challenges facing the country. CPRN plans to develop a research and dialogue program that helps to address these issues.

"*Connecting with Canadians* will respond to current issues, identify emerging challenges and pay attention to public values and perspectives," explains CPRN President Sharon Manson Singer. "*Connecting with Canadians* will be valuable to Canadians and their leaders in finding solutions to the most pressing problems we face."

Connecting with Canadians is based on a framework of expectations and obligations: what Canadians have told us they expect from government, business and community organizations and what they believe, as citizens, we should give back to society. Together, this set of expectations and obligations represents a vision of the Canada that Canadians want.

CPRN identified from its deliberative dialogues and research five challenges to address in public policy research that are critical to achieving this vision: citizenship; diversity; productivity and skills; health and our aging population; and the environment. Addressing the challenges is the focus of CPRN's *Connecting with Canadians* research to find innovative policy ideas to move Canada forward.

Summit participants confirmed the importance of these challenges and identified key barriers and opportunities to address them. The review considered four overarching themes that affect each of the challenges: the need for leadership; the role of the public sector; the importance of building Canada's place in the world; and the need to address the plight of Aboriginal peoples in our country.

Summit participants focused on the importance of leadership and its role in encouraging the development of a deeper practice of citizenship. Participants called for the following specific actions:

- **Citizenship** – CPRN was encouraged to hold a nation-wide conversation on citizenship in the 21st century that would engage Canadians widely and contribute to building a long-term national vision. In addition, public institutions should be encouraged to draw upon and embrace the successes of community groups and individuals who organized and implemented change using innovative approaches. Doing so will deepen citizen participation and strengthen communities in moving forward.

- **Diversity** – Define diversity as an issue of inclusion or exclusion; equity or inequity; not as a matter of accommodation. We not only need leadership from governments, community organizations and business but also Canadians in their homes, schools, and workplaces. This will support a dialogue that builds understanding of what it means to be Canadian in the 21st century.
- **Productivity and Skills** – Foster a culture of innovation across all sectors of society. We need both social and economic innovation. In addition, we need more investment in people starting with early childhood education. Making lifelong learning a reality is essential to stronger citizenship and Canada’s long-term development. Priority should be given to better dialogue across institutions, regions, provinces and governments to communicate best practices. Further, employers need to consider the development of talent in a broad way: not only offering learning programs, but also organizing work in a way that fosters a culture of learning in the workplace.
- **Health and Aging Population** – Stronger relationships among all health care players including governments and service providers are needed to break down barriers to change and to improve health care delivery and quality of life. We need to reshape Canada’s health care conversation to focus on health, wellness and prevention. Priority areas of research include health, justice and equity especially as related to marginalized groups; identifying the values and problems blocking change to patient-centred care; and, encourage individuals and communities to empower themselves in relation to their health needs to improve health outcomes.
- **The Environment** – Take advantage of the huge potential for Canada to lead the world in the greening of our economy, communities and homes. We need to close the gap between words and deeds and be realistic about the cost of changing. A cultural shift is required and citizenship should be the critical lens for the environmental dialogue.

“We value the Summit’s advice and the importance participants gave to well considered and researched public policy to address the challenges Canada faces,” said Manson Singer. “We look forward to working with participants as we pursue *Connecting with Canadians* research.”

For more information about the *Connecting with Canadians* research framework, the five challenges being addressed, and to read or download the Summit workbook and background materials, [click here](#).

Contact:

Dr. Sharon Manson Singer
President
Canadian Policy Research Networks
613-567-7500, ext. 2001
Email: smansonsinger@cprn.org