



Peter and Melanie Munk Launch International Public Debate Series

Acclaimed global “thinkers” and “doers” to gather twice a year in Toronto to debate the major issues facing Canada and the world

National poll conducted by the Munk Debates shows Canadians concerned about the lack of quality and one-sidedness of public discussion in Canada

Toronto (April 11, 2008) – Peter and Melanie Munk announced today the launch of the Munk Debates – a semi-annual debate series designed to elevate and enliven public discussion on the major challenges facing Canada and the world.

The first debate focuses on the impact of the U.S. election on global security. The resolution: “The world is a safer place with a Republican in the White House.”

Arguing against the resolution is **Samantha Power**, a leading human rights scholar, Pulitzer Prize award-winning author and former Barack Obama advisor, and Hillary Clinton foreign policy advisor **Ambassador Richard Holbrooke**, one of the world’s premier negotiators. He is best known as the chief architect of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Speaking for the resolution is Washington Post columnist **Charles Krauthammer**, a psychiatrist-turned-award-winning-pundit whose writing has influenced U.S. foreign policy for a quarter century, and renowned British historian and prolific writer **Niall Ferguson**, a John McCain supporter who was singled out by *Time Magazine* as one of the world’s “one-hundred most influential people.”

A national survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid for the Munk Debates revealed that fully three out of every four Canadians (77 per cent) are concerned about the lack of substance and the one-sidedness of public debate in Canada today. Fully eight in ten (79 per cent) feel that as a people Canadians are “too reserved” when it comes to debating important issues. On a more positive note, eight out of ten Canadians (83 per cent) enjoy being exposed to people and ideas that challenge the way they look at the world.

The purpose of the Munk Debates is to encourage Canadians to set aside pre-conceived notions and consider afresh both sides of a pressing public policy issue. An experiment in civic dialogue, each debate will begin with an audience vote on the resolution followed by a second vote at the debate’s conclusion.

“With public discourse increasingly polarized, we believe the debate format offers a valuable opportunity for Canadians to listen to ‘the other side’ of the important

issues of the day as argued by some of the world's sharpest minds," said Rudyard Griffiths, Co-Director of the Munk Debates with Patrick Luciani. "Ultimately our objective is to support a better and more informed public debate," Griffiths added.

With Canadians closely following the U.S. Primaries the Munk Debates chose for the first debate an American topic which has significant implications for Canada – would a Democratic or Republican President be better for global security?

The Munk Debates is a signature initiative of the Aurea Foundation, a charitable organization founded in 2006 by Peter and Melanie Munk to support Canadian institutions involved in the study and development of public policy.

"Our philanthropy is aimed primarily at improving the quality and vitality of public debate in Canada," said Peter Munk, speaking to the rationale for the Munk Debates. Whether it is the support we provide to the Munk Centre at the University of Toronto, the funding to the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre that has allowed the facility to acquire state of the art imaging equipment, and now – through our Aurea Foundation – the Munk Debates, we are broadening public knowledge, education and informed debate."

Munk Debates is open to the public. The inaugural debate takes place on Monday, May 26, 2008 at The Royal Ontario Museum (100 Queen's Park, Toronto) at 6:30 p.m. in the Currelly Gallery with a free public reception to follow in the Lee Chin Crystal. Tickets for the debate are \$20 each and can be purchased online at www.munkdebates.com. Seating is limited. Proceeds from the ticket sales will be donated to the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation.

For more information on the Munk Debates including full biographical notes for presenters appearing at the May 26 debate and the full survey results of the Munk Debate / Ipsos-Reid poll including data tables visit www.munkdebates.com/media.

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