**RYERSON'S FACULTY OF ARTS, SAMARA CANADA ESTABLISH
DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT EXCHANGE**

*New initiative to drive democratic engagement by bringing together the Ryerson community with
community-based organizations and local leaders.*

TORONTO, Nov. 27, 2017 --- Ryerson University's Faculty of Arts has established the
Democratic Engagement Exchange, thanks to the vision and support of Samara Canada.

"We need to strengthen the voices of all people living in Canada by making democracy more
inclusive and accessible," said Pam Sugiman, Dean of the Faculty of Arts. "Through this
initiative, the Faculty of Arts is demonstrating its strong commitment to creating a socially just,
democratic society. Without Samara's vision and continued commitment to build a stronger
democracy for all Canadians, this initiative would not be possible."

Housed in the Faculty of Arts, the Exchange will serve as a catalyst to foster democratic
engagement with the Ryerson community and external community partners by:

- developing tools and programs for democratic engagement in marginalized
  communities;
- providing training and consultation services to community-based organizations;
  and
- championing policies and programs that foster democratic engagement.

"We are thrilled that programming incubated at Samara has found a perfect home at Ryerson
University," said Jane Hilderman, Samara Canada's Executive Director. "With its diverse and
thriving student body and institutional leverage, the Faculty of Arts offers an opportunity to scale
the programs to engage many thousands of Canadians. With the Exchange in able hands,
Samara Canada will continue to dedicate energy towards innovative research and the
incubation of original programming for public leaders and active citizens to drive change to
Canada's democracy."

The Exchange will build on two programs developed by Samara Canada, which are delivered in
partnership with community-based organizations: Democracy Talks and Vote PopUp.

Democracy Talks is a between-elections program that gives marginalized Canadians the
opportunity to discover and develop their political voice.

Vote PopUp, initially developed in partnership with Elections Canada, is a program for first-time
and infrequent voters to demystify and understand the voting process.

Through these programs, over the last four years, Samara has successfully engaged nearly 300
local, regional and national organizations; involved over 10,000 community members in
programs; and trained more than 1,000 staff and community leaders to foster civic engagement.

"An inclusive democracy does not just happen; we have to build and nurture it. I am looking forward to working with the exceptionally talented faculty, staff and students at Ryerson who share a passion for building an inclusive democracy," said John Beebe, Senior Advisor on Democratic Engagement, who will head the new initiative at the university.

The Exchange demonstrates the faculty's commitment to fostering civic responsibility and engagement. In May, the faculty announced the [Jarislowsky Chair in Democracy](#) to provide a public forum for discussion and debate about democratic issues, thanks to a $2-million donation from the Jarislowsky Foundation.

In 2012, the faculty established the [Jack Layton Chair](#) to honour the late NDP leader's legacy both in the classroom as a professor of politics and as one of Canada's most progressive politicians. Through the efforts of the founding chair, Dr. Myer Siemiatycki, and current chair holder, Dr. Doreen Fumia, the Chair has established initiatives such as the Jack Layton Leadership School for Youth Leadership, which has more than 500 alumni; an annual lecture series featuring speakers including Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi and former NDP leader Ed Broadbent; and the Jack Layton Book Club.

Olivia Chow, a distinguished visiting professor in the Faculty of Arts, also heads the Institute for Change Leaders, a workshop that teaches students effective community organizing practices to lead strong, grassroots advocacy campaigns.

About Samara Canada

Samara Canada is an independent, non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada's democracy. Through innovative research and transformative programming for active citizens and leaders, Samara drives positive change in the way politics and engagement are done in Canada. For more information visit samaracanada.com

About Ryerson University

Ryerson University is Canada's leader in innovative, career-oriented education. Urban, culturally diverse and inclusive, the university is home to more than 44,600 students, including 2,600 master's and PhD students, 3,100 faculty and staff, and nearly 185,000 alumni worldwide. For more information, visit ryerson.ca.

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