



MEDIA ADVISORY
For January 25 to 27, 2019

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FORMER SENIOR ADVISORS TO WORLD LEADERS TO DEBATE IN TORONTO AT DEMOCRACYXCHANGE SUMMIT

Toronto, ON — Two former senior advisers to world leaders, one on the left and one on the right, will meet at Canada's only democracy summit to discuss the roots of populist movements here and around the world. **Sarada Peri**, former Special Assistant and Senior Speechwriter for President Barack Obama, and **Sean Speer**, former Senior Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, will dissect the resurgence of populist trends as they discuss inequality, globalization, nationalism, the decline of public trust and more.

WHO:

Sarada Peri is a writer and communications strategist who has helped top leaders and thinkers, from Fortune 50 CEOs to the President of the United States, inspire and persuade audiences. Prior to joining the White House, she was a Principal at West Wing Writers, where she worked with corporate, political and non-profit clients on speeches, op-eds, books and message strategy. She also was a member of the 2012 and 2016 Democratic National Convention speechwriting teams. Today, she [runs her own](#) speechwriting and strategy practice.

Sean Speer is an instructor and senior fellow at the University of Toronto's [Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy](#). He is also a research fellow at public policy think-tanks in Ottawa and Washington. Sean has written extensively about Canadian public policy issues, including income inequality, social mobility, taxation and government spending. When he served as a Senior Adviser to Prime Minister Stephen Harper his particular focus was on economic and fiscal policy.

WHAT:

[DemocracyXChange](#) is a new annual summit for Canada's emerging democracy sector to connect, learn and share ideas and methods for driving change from the ground up. The three-day summit will bring together more than 50 speakers, 350 thought leaders, community activists, companies, media-makers, academics, public servants, decision-makers and citizens from multiple countries and across the ideological spectrum. Co-founded by the Open Democracy Project and Ryerson Leadership Lab, more info on the conference can be found at www.democracyxchange.org (limited media passes available).

WHEN: Keynote Debate: Populism and its Discontents — January 27, 9:00 to 10:00 am
Summit — January 25 to 27

WHERE: Ryerson University, Ted Rogers School of Management
55 Dundas Street W Toronto, ON M5G 2C3 [View Map](#)

WHY:

Globally, the indicators are clear. We are in the midst of a democratic recession. As Canada enters a federal election year, in an age of polarization, it is more important than ever to connect across borders and political lines to focus on ground-up, community change.

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***Ryerson Leadership Lab** is an action-oriented think tank that takes a leadership development approach to today's most pressing civic challenges. Through three activities — research and policy development, education and public engagement — we are building a new generation of skilled, nimble leaders, at all ages and stages, to help build a more trustworthy, inclusive society.*

***Open Democracy Project** is a not-for-profit working to empower everyday citizens to drive change through civic and political action. Open Democracy Project programs include DemocracyKit, a resource library for planning and running municipal election and other civic campaigns; and DemocracyXChange, the annual summit for Canada's emerging democracy sector to connect, learn and share.*

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