Policy Implementation from the 'Centre': What's involved?

Rachel Curran

Former Director of Policy to Prime Minister Stephen Harper
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9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

Ever wondered what happens around the policy table in the Prime Minister's office? Ever think about what is necessary in order to translate a policy agenda into changes on the ground? Ever consider whether or not an elected government has been given a clear mandate and, if so, is it possible to translate *all* campaign promises into real-life policy change after the election?

In her workshop, Rachel Curran, former Director of Policy to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, will take participants through the ins and outs of decision-making and the exercise of political power at the center of our federal government. She will explore the various facets of the PMO, who is on the team, how decisions are made, and the dynamics between the Prime Minister's Office and the public service.

Considering these dynamics and the political reality that the PMO faces every day, she will provide insight into what *is* and *is not* possible when it comes to translating campaign promises into policy. She will discuss whether there is such a thing as a clear mandate and whether one is even necessary. Drawing on personal experience, Ms. Curran will take participants through some of the major decisions that have been made around domestic and international policy crises, how policy decisions were implemented, and the degree to which the outputs measured up to big election promises. Working with participants, Ms. Curran will finish off the day by addressing (using a specific proposal for change chosen by the group) how to make sure the public agenda in the next Federal Election translates into real policy by those elected to the PMO.

If you are interested in helping shape the policy agenda for future generations, take this workshop to found out first-hand how it works on the inside!

Outline

I.   How Decisions are Made: the Executive Branch in a Nutshell
II. The Prime Minister's Office
    a.   The team
    b.   The decision-making structure
    c.   The relationship with the public service
III. Setting the Policy Agenda – where do mandates come from?
    a.   What gets on and how – where are campaign promises?
    b.   Are mandates given? Are they necessary? Do they count?
    c.   Challenges
IV. Implementing policy from the 'centre'
    a.   Dealing with crises at home and abroad
    b.   Shaping the message and measuring success
V.   Growing the policy-making voice of future generations

Required Readings*

Craft, J. (2016) Chapter 1: "A 'No Surprises' Environment", In *Backrooms and Beyond: Partisan Advisers and the Politics of Policy Work in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF00C0

Curran, Rachel (2017) "How Governments Get Stuff Done". *Policy Options*. December 26.
http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/december-2017/how-governments-get-stuff-done/

Curran, Rachel (2016) "Parliament returns, policy work ramps up". *Policy Options*. September 19.
http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/september-2016/parliament-returns-policy-work-ramps-up/

Flynn, Greg (2011) "Rethinking Policy Capacity in Canada: The Role of Parties and Election Platforms in Government Policy-Making". *Canadian Public Administration,* 54(2), 235-253. http://0-dx.doi.org.mercury.concordia.ca/10.1111/j.1754-7121.2011.00172.x

Goldenberg, E. (2007) Chapter 5: "The Prime Minister's Office"*, In The Way it Works: Inside Ottawa*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, p.70-96 http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF010F

Additional Resources

Goldenberg, Eddie (2007) *The Way it Works: Inside Ottawa*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart.
  Chapter 4: "Cabinet Making: Choosing the Team"
  Chapter 6: "How Cabinet Works"

Howlett, Michael (1998) Predictable and Unpredictable Policy Windows: Institutional and Exogenous Correlates of Canadian Federal Agenda-Setting. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 31(3), 495-524.
http://www.sfu.ca/~howlett/documents/Ch2Agenda-Setting.pdf

Rabe, Barry G. (2018) "Can States Deliver on Climate Promises?" *Brookings*.
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2018/01/26/can-states-deliver-on-climate-promises/

Savoie, Donald (1999) *Governing from the Center: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press. http://0-www.deslibris.ca.mercury.concordia.ca/ID/417903

Smith, Alex (2009) The Roles and Responsibilities of Central Agencies. *Library of Parliament Research Publications.*
https://lop.parl.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb0901-e.htm

*If you are registered for non-credit and are unable to locate the readings, please contact us at wssr@concordia.ca