

WSSR WORKSHOPS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Policy-Making at the 'Center': How does it work?

Rachel Curran

Former Director of Policy to Prime Minister Stephen Harper

May 11, 2018

9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

Ever wondered what happens around the policy table in the Prime Minister's office? Ever curious about why some policies make it on the agenda and others don't? 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. She will also explore some of the major decisions that have been made around domestic and international policy crises, as well as what she thinks can be done to improve how policy is made at the 'centre'.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to find out what goes on at the core of our democracy's decision-making!

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
 - a. What gets on and how
 - b. Challenges
- IV. Dealing with crises at home and abroad
 - a. Domestic policy crises
 - b. International policy crises
- V. Improving Policy-Making for Future Generations

Required Readings*

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



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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>

Additional Resources

Goldenberg, Eddie (2007) *The Way it Works: Inside Ottawa*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart.

Chapter 4: "Cabinet Making: Choosing the Team" <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF00F7>

Chapter 6: "How Cabinet Works" <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF00EE>

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>

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>

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

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