

WSSR WORKSHOPS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Do Public Inquiries Improve Democracy?

Honourable John Gomery

Former Superior Court of Quebec Judge and Public Inquiry

Commissioner

March 9th, 2018

9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

2017 marked 10 years since the final report produced by the Gomery commission. And so, what better time to answer the question: *Do Public Inquiries improve democracy?* Inquiries are designed to gather information and evidence, and provide reasoned and well-researched recommendations in order to avoid future misconduct or mismanagement that can negatively impact the institutions and individuals in our democracy. But to what degree to such Inquiries truly make a difference?

Honourable Justice John H. Gomery was the Public Inquiry Commissioner responsible for investigating the allegations of corruption and collusion relating to the Sponsorship Program, a scandal that so deeply tarnished the last Liberal government. His mandate also included providing recommendations for future governments to avoid “mismanagement” in the future.

In his workshop, Gomery will discuss the impact his Commission had on government administration and the fate of some of his recommendations. He will explore the ways in which commissions such as his can help governments to avoid corruption and scandal in the future: whether a better balance of power between the PMO and the legislature is achievable, and the ways in which even greater media and public demands for government transparency can help to improve our democracy.

Outline

1. The Public Inquiry

- a. What is it?
- b. How does it work?
- c. Is it effective?
- d. The importance of evidence

2. The Gomery Commission

- a. Who was involved?
- b. What were the recommendations?
- c. The impact
- d. Lessons learned

3. Improving Democracy

- a. Should there be more inquiries?
- b. The PMO-Legislature balance
- c. The public, the media, and transparency



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Required Readings*

- Government of Canada. 2005. *Who is Responsible? Summary* Reference Cat. No: CP32-86/1-2005-1
http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/003/008/099/003008-disclaimer.html?orig=/100/206/301/pco-bcp/commissions/sponsorship-ef/06-02-10/www.gomery.ca/en/phaseIreport/summary/es_full_v01.pdf
- Witelson, Tamar. 2003. "Declaration of Independence" in *Commissions of Inquiry: Praise or Reappraise*. (eds) Allan Manson & David Mullan, eds. Toronto: Irwin Law, pp. 301-360.
<http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?144352AE>
- Savoie, Donald J. 2003. "Introduction" in *Breaking the Bargain*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 3-20. <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?1441C261>
- Savoie, Donald J. 1999. "Introduction" in *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 3-16. <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF1599>
- Gomery. 2008. "Transparency and Access to Information". *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law* 4.
<http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?144B4338>

Recommended Readings

- Allan Manson & David Mullan. 2003. *Commissions of Inquiry: Praise or Reappraise*. Toronto: Irwin Law, 2003.
- Savoie, Donald J. 2003. *Breaking the Bargain*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Savoie, Donald J. 1999. *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

*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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