Money Matters: Fiscal Performance in Minority Parliaments  
Kevin Page  
Former Parliamentary Budget Officer, Founding President and CEO of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, University of Ottawa  
April 3, 2020  
9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary
The current parliamentary session is playing out in a politically divided House of Commons. This is only the second time in Canada that a governing party will form a government with less than 35% of the national popular vote. The key to governing in a minority Parliament is confidence. The current Liberal government can remain in power as long as it maintains the confidence of the majority of members in the House of Commons.

Are minority governments the new normal? It is often assumed that minority parliaments can be unstable and unpredictable, while majority governments imply steadiness and predictability. Does this mean Canadians should expect little legislative progress on policy issues over the next few years? Similarly, it is often assumed that fragile governments are more likely to choose expensive policy options and deficit financing. Does this mean the federal government will not be able to achieve its fiscal rule of a declining debt to GDP ratio over the next five years?

In this workshop, we will review evidence and advice from international studies on minority parliaments. What lessons and strategies can be gleaned to promote legislative productivity on important policy issues and promote fiscal responsibility? We will examine Budget 2020 (to be tabled in Parliament in March) to determine if the Liberal government is employing collaborative strategies to drive better policy outcomes for Canadians. We will review 2019 political party platforms to determine potential opportunities for future collaboration.

The purpose of this perspective is to deepen our understanding of the political dynamics on policy and budget implementation in a minority parliament scenario to better position us (as citizens and rational voters) to demand progress on important economic, environmental, social and fiscal issues. As a former Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr. Page will draw on his own experience in this workshop to collaborate with participants on assessing Budget 2020 and developing budget and political strategies.

Outline
The day will be begin with an overview of Budget 2020 and a comparison of policy measures with commitments in the 2019 Liberal Party Platform. Lessons learned from international studies on enhancing performance in minority parliaments will be used to assess government performance and to develop (in class) new policy and fiscal strategies for Budget 2021.
**Required Readings**

Consult the following:


Familiarize yourself with the following texts:


*If you are registered for non-credit, please contact us at wssr@concordia.ca for access to this reading.