**November 2, 2017**

**Book Launch: A Lantern on the Bow: A History of the Science Council of Canada and its Contributions to the Science and Innovation Policy Debate**

**New Book on the Science Council of Canada mines the past for lessons on science policy and advice**

Speakers: Michael Jenkin, retired civil servant and former SCC staffer; Janet Halliwell, final SCC president and chairman, Principal, JE Halliwell Associates Inc.; Jeff Kinder, Director of Innovation Lab, Institute on Governance; Paul Dufour, Fellow and Adjunct Professor, Institute for Science, Society and Policy, University of Ottawa

One of Canada’s most renowned government science policy organizations is being revived, at least in book form. Co-editors Paul Dufour and Jeff Kinder chose the Canadian Science Policy Conference to launch their new book on the Science Council of Canada (SCC), an arm’s length think tank that operated from 1966 to 1992.

*A Lantern on the Bow: A History of the Science Council of Canada* is in the final stages of compilation with a publication date slated for early 2018. It contains chapters contributed by 13 science policy experts, many of whom worked at the SCC. The book details the impressive body of work produced by the SCC and the forward-looking advice it provided to government, complete with recommendations.

Much of the work conducted by the SCC focused on industrial and technology policy, more commonly referred to these days as innovation policy. The major conclusions made by the SCC over the years don’t seem all that revolutionary or controversial today but at the time they represented a major departure from the conventional wisdom and science policy of the day.

“While this is a book about looking back, it’s also a book about looking forward in terms of what we’ve learned from our current experiments in science and science policy,” says co-editor and contributor Paul Dufour. “I think the Science Council of Canada contributed greatly, particularly around the current science and innovation policy debates we’re having today.”

For example, several SCC reports reinforced the contention – which was new at the time – that the emergence of technologically sophisticated commercial activity was key to export success, stable growth and high-paying jobs. As such, it should be the primary focus of any industrial policy.

“From the middle 1970s through to the early 1980s, we were going through in Canada and most of the industrialized world a crisis in economic policy,” says Michael Jenkins, a former staffer at the SCC. “That was where the science council’s approach became both controversial and very different. It took as its departure point how to get inside that black box called technology and it did it from a very different perspective … It drew on a lot of the work done in Europe in the sixties … how the evolution of technology had changed the nature of how industries performed.”

Janet Halliwell, the SCC’s last president, noted that the work of the SCC took five major trajectories: mapping and analyzing major scientific disciplines; major science projects; relationships and interactions among scientific activities and national needs; the application of science and technology to specific sectors of the Canadian economy and technology; and industrial and innovation policy.

“In all our major reports on large-scale initiatives was that central theme of aligning our investments with social and economic benefit for Canadians, and how you achieve that dynamic balance. “We were talking about things like oceans, water, space, the upper atmosphere (and) we positioned these in the context of national goals … They were somewhat embryonic at the time but we really tried to take a stand on that … focused on the science, engineering and technology dimensions.”

Because all SCC reports included recommendations, Dufour said that meant “you were going to get into trouble on occasion”. Controversy often followed some of its recommendations which stimulated debate across the country. The landscape for science policy began to change in the 1980s when government developed in-house policy capacity which led to an atmosphere of tension and competition, eventually leading to the closure of the SCC, ostensibly as a cost cutting measure.

“I do have a fond memory and passion for what an organization like the science council could do, and how it’s pan-Canadian, independent nature allowed it to address emerging issues which I think other organizations struggle to get at,” said Dufour. “At some point, governments hate getting advice that’s independent, sometimes when it clashes with their own agenda, platform and ideology, so you have to be extremely carefully about the context in which you’re providing advice. That’s the lesson I learned.”

Dufour noted that many of the more than 400 reports produced by the SCC have been digitized. They are available at www.artsites.uottawa.ca/sca/en/science-council-of-canada.