November 1, 2017  
**Contested Decisions: The Role of Boundary Organizations**  
Organized by: Marc Saner, Institute for Science, Society and Policy, University of Ottawa

Speakers: Frédéric Bouchard, President, ACFAS (Association francophone pour le savoir);

Karen Dodds, Former Assistant Deputy Minister, Environment and Climate Change Canada;

Johannes Klumpers, Head of Unit, Scientific Advice Mechanism, European Commission;

Marc Saner, Professor, University of Ottawa

Moderator: Sonia L’Heureux, Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament  
  
**Takeaways and recommendations**

* The formulation of questions put to boundary organizations should be examined.
  + Questions and interests can shift rapidly, especially in a policy-relevant environment.
  + Engage in a dialogue and make the questions and expectations explicit: it requires going back and forth, and the courage to ask for clarification.
* Scientists should offer scientific input and advice, contributing their expertise provides a critical contribution to policy development
* Policymaking is a specific “craft” that has its own considerations and imperatives – e.g., timing pressures and incomplete information are constants that are part of the policymaking process
* Βoundary organizations can be a bridge to these two specialized functions
* Academics should be clear who their funders are and the policy motivation behind the funding.
* Think tanks are playing a broader role in policymaking with the emergence of a knowledge-based society. Historically, research and its findings were the purview of universities alone; now, trained researchers also work at boundary organizations, using research to support policy.
* The emergence of think tanks in society means knowledge plays an increasing role in decision-making and in society.
* Think tanks answer specific timely questions but are beholden to the question askers who fund their work.
* The Scientific Advice Mechanism is a boundary organization that advises the European Commission.
* There are several challenges for the Scientific Advice Mechanism:
  + Delivering science advice within political timescales;
  + Choosing effective evidence review techniques; and
  + Communicating advice to policymakers and the public, particularly when it involves uncertainties.