



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

OCCASIONAL LECTURE SERIES

Paying politicians: do we get what we pay for? Lessons from Canada

Christopher Kam

Theatre, Parliament House
Friday 22 March 12.15pm to 1.15pm

Observers and parliamentarians have long complained of the amateur and transient nature of Canadian parliamentary careers. Indeed, a series of policies, notably the introduction of salaries and pensions for MPs in the early 1950s and a substantial increase in these benefits in the mid-1980s, were adopted precisely to attract and retain a 'better' grade of MP. The hope was that the increased compensation would induce highly talented (and well-paid) individuals to give up their chosen professions in favour of far riskier parliamentary careers.

Drawing on the Canadian experience, this lecture asks: to what extent did the changes to salaries and pensions of MPs alter the occupational mixture and educational status of candidates who contested federal elections? And did the changes induce MPs to extend their parliamentary careers? Answers to these questions inform a broad debate in Westminster parliamentary democracies about the desirability and effectiveness of using monetary compensation to motivate and control elected representatives.

Christopher Kam is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of British Columbia. His main area of research is the nature and evolution of Westminster parliamentary democracy. He is the author of *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government* as well as numerous academic articles on parliamentary careers, ministerial selection and cabinet reshuffles.



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Enquiries to Senate Procedure Office
Phone: (02) 6277 3072
Email: research.sen@aph.gov.au

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