

INTRODUCTION

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One of the most serious gaps in *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* has been the lack of articles describing, analyzing, and commenting on provincial evaluation policy and practice in Canada. A review of the *Journal's* Index reveals that no articles on this general topic have been published since the inception of the *Journal* 16 years ago. The same search demonstrates no shortage of articles providing critical perspectives on federal evaluation policy and practice. Indeed, if we were to rely on our national journal as our only source of information regarding evaluation policy and practice, we would know more about Danish, Australian, American, and European experience than that of our provincial governments.

It may be argued that this bias is not unusual. A more extensive literature search could find only two publications on general provincial evaluation practice — one on Quebec and one on Ontario. Such a pattern is not unusual in research on public administration in Canada. Generally speaking and with the possible exception of Quebec, it has focused largely on developments in the federal public service and not on innovations and initiatives of provincial public services. At the same time, we know that, at least occasionally, the federal government adopts provincial experience. Certainly, business-planning systems existed in the Government of Alberta before they were introduced in Ottawa. The establishment of a federal Management Board follows the creation of such a structure in the Government of Ontario in the 1970s.

The volume of material relating to the federal government should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that normally the flow of ideas and innovations is from the centre to the provinces. The work of Sharkansky (1968) and others in the U.S. illustrates the fact that innovation at the state level results largely from emulating the practices of other, frequently neighbouring, states. Rubin's (1993) more recent studies of state budgeting systems reinforce such findings.

This special issue is an effort to respond to this shortcoming in our knowledge and in the coverage of evaluation provided by *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*. My thanks go out to the authors who responded to the call and who produced the articles that follow. Initially, we expected articles for each of the provinces and the Government of the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, three authors were unable to submit manuscripts. Individuals who are interested in submitting prospective articles on evaluation policy and practice in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, or Saskatchewan are encouraged to do so. We hope that we shall be able to provide more complete coverage of provincial evaluation policy and practice by publishing such articles in future issues.

REFERENCES

- Rubin, I. (1993). *The politics of public budgeting*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Sharkansky, I. (1968). *Spending in the American states*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.