T. Axworthy, “Of Secretaries to Princes,” *CPA* 31 (Summer, 1988)

**Overview:**

Enduring issue of public admin is the ability of political leaders to implement an agenda and master events. Axworthy argues that 1) it is possible to prevent the urgent from overwhelming the important, but only if a strategic plan is adopted; 2) to implement such a strategic plan, it is necessary to have a highly competent, partisan personal staff; but also that 3) in Canada we are in danger of blurring the lines between a partisan PMO and our tradition of a neutral public service. This blurring of the lines will ultimately impede the attempt to develop a strategic prime ministership.

**Background**

* The article has solely to do with PMO
* Democratic politics is fundamentally a debate about conviction, while democratic leadership is the ability to educate, arouse, and energize citizens to work for goals that represent mutual values
* Axworthy: the purpose of the PMO is to join “policy and politics, structure and process in a coherent plan that can change with events (but not too foten) and that takes into account constraints and available resources”
* In a 4 year term, a PM has the time to concentrate extensively on four or five issues at most, while the cabinet can devote substantial effort to only a further 25 or 30 problems.
* The PMO is a central partisan agency and the role of the PMO is to promote a partisan perspective (Axworthy believes in a strong, partisan PMO). Commitment to a set of values/office fosters creativity, and the bureaucracy exists to provide impartiality, experience, and caution – which as Axworthy describes them, as equally important components to policy making.
* The Cdn system of govt “with its amalgam of partisan advisors and neutral public servants combines equal doses of commitment and consistency”
* Hx of the 1981 budget suggests that whatever the four or five overall priorities of a govt, the economy must always be one of them.