

THE ROBERT A. YOUNG LECTURE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

GOVERNING THE HOMELESSNESS CRISIS IN CANADA

Despite decades of efforts, billions of dollars, and multiple plans to “end” homelessness, more people are unhoused in Canada than ever before. Previously thought of as a big city problem, communities in all sizes across Canada are now grappling with crises of a lack of affordable housing and homelessness. This research seeks to understand why a country that is as rich, and as cold, as Canada fails to provide adequate, safe, affordable housing to everyone.

My work seeks to understand the homelessness crisis from a governance perspective by asking what explains different patterns of governance of homelessness across Canada. Looking at homelessness from this perspective uncovers some significant challenges, but also opportunities, posed by the distribution of powers and responsibilities in the Canadian federation. Drawing on interviews with key policy-makers at all levels of government and in all sectors of society, and with a focus on ideas and institutions, this work shows important shifts in how homelessness is understood, and how homelessness is governed in the past five years. Local and regional governments in particular are taking a much more active role in the production of social protection for some of the most vulnerable people living in Canada, a fascinating development that has important implications for social policy governance more broadly.

FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 2024

10:30am – SSC 7210



Alison Smith

Alison Smith is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto Mississauga. Her research focuses on the governance and prevention of homelessness in Canada.

