

The Queen's Park After-party: Post-Cabinet Life in the Legislature

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Abstract: Cabinet is often regarded as the pinnacle of the Legislature and thus typically the subject of public scrutiny and academic research. However, there has been little or no study of parliamentarians post-Cabinet. This paper explores how Cabinet experience shapes the perceptions, behaviours and relationships of Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) who remain in the Legislature as Ex-Ministers. Two sets of key informant interviews were conducted: one with past Cabinet Ministers from the province's three major political parties (Liberal, New Democrat and Progressive Conservative) and another with Queen's Park journalists as well as consultants and lobbyists from Toronto firms (referred to as public agents). Ex-Ministers did not report that they actively set out to join Cabinet nor did they have expectations of attaining a Ministerial post. They report that Cabinet experience has enhanced their ability to act as facilitators, information sources and 'tour guides' to stakeholders. While opposition Ex-Ministers draw on their Cabinet experience to effectively challenge and hold the government to account, government Ex-Ministers lack similar outlets to showcase their skills and knowledge. Additionally, three distinct personalities were found among Ex-Minister participants: the Maverick, the Valedictorian and the Good Soldier. Results are discussed with respect to the evolution of the parliamentary career and its impact on the political culture of Queen's Park.

Context and Theoretical Foundation

"It has always amused me in politics why if you don't happen to reach the one top job, how you're supposed not to be a success...there have got to be several tops...they [parliamentarians] can't all reach the one top" claimed, renowned British Conservative politician R. A. Butler, in a 1966 BBC interview (Riddell, 1993: 259). Butler's words address the inevitable tangling of professional ambition, political stature and personal identity, which has the overwhelming capacity to disillusion those brave enough to partake in this daring sport. Although he refers to Prime Minister as the 'one top job', this paper will explore Ontario Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) who have achieved one of Butler's implied 'several tops', particularly the post of Cabinet Minister. Since Cabinet is often discussed and regarded as the pinnacle (undoubtedly a 'top') of a parliamentarian's career, this researcher sought out MPPs who have left Cabinet under certain conditions but remain in the Legislature as Ex-Ministers.

The growing number of full-time or career parliamentarians has transformed politics from an extra-curricular activity for passionate activists to a respected and sought after profession. The establishment of the professional politician has significantly increased the resources, time and energy dedicated to processes and procedures necessary for success in this field. Riddell argues that *"the real difference is the degree of dependence on politics not just as a livelihood but as a mark of status and esteem"* (Riddell, 1993: 263). Contemporary politics sometimes cultivates narcissistic traits in elected officials who self-righteously express their ideological perspectives as well as inspire and implement positive change on behalf of constituents. Very few professions require such an open and intense level of commitment to public service thus resulting in the blending of personal and professional values. Politicians, often unknowingly, intertwine their personal and professional identities, sometimes finding validation and fulfilment in political success. It is understandable, though not always healthy, for a politician to become engrossed in a career, which is both deeply gruelling and gratifying. *"One's identity can come from a sense of direction that relates to career achievements, performance of a personal philosophy, human relations, affecting events, exercise of a talent and so forth"* (Bullitt, 1977: 238). Though these factors can be attributed to several professions, they exist collectively and most obviously in politics where careers begin and end in the public eye. Shaffir & Kleinknecht describe the negative implications for politicians whose individual identity becomes instinctively linked to their work as psychologically damaging. These politicians experience feelings of immense fulfilment and self-worth when in office but then internalize the stigma of political defeat which typically leads to disengagement and detachment (2002: 16).

Most would agree that ambition is the driving force for individuals who embark on the arduous journey to public office. What begins as a noble journey shared between community leaders soon becomes a fiercely competitive game where only the fittest can and will survive – a long-standing view of politics celebrated in novels, television shows and films (Riddell, 1993: 266). This perception has led to both public admiration and disdain for those we elect as our leaders. Loomis states that *"ambition is as American as apple pie, yet we distrust it profoundly"* indicating that while we require and expect our politicians to be innately ambitious and motivated, we inadvertently view them with some level of caution and suspicion (1988: 18). Politicians therefore walk a fine line between fulfilling their political ambitions by pursuing policy influence through a higher office and remaining a grassroots representative who is unabashedly dedicated to his or her constituents (essentially immune to the fallacies of greed and corruption typically associated with politicians). This presents a unique challenge as politicians' ambitions are public - they must continually seek approval from constituents while also impressing new audiences if they wish to advance in the political world. This requires skilful balancing of their personal and public agendas; as Loomis describes, it demands a political entrepreneur (1988: 13). Entrepreneurial behaviour supplements the 'great ego strength' that most politicians bring to the table

by reducing the potential for political failure especially in an increasingly competitive legislative environment. Political institutions provide a fluid structure of opportunities for politicians seeking to advance in both public and behind-the-scenes positions. However, they must come to terms with the publicity and implicit criticism associated with a failed attempt (Loomis, 1988: 18-19).

As politicians become immersed in political life and culture, initial feelings of uncertainty and confusion are gradually replaced by confidence and determination. This growth facilitates a seamless adoption of 'politician' as their primary status. As a result, any loss or regression in their political career is viewed as stunting their personal growth (Shaffir and Kleinknecht, 2002: 16). According to Riddell, ambitious career politicians therefore have the greatest incentive to follow a "*rational strategy for moving up the informal hierarchy of elective offices in the American political system*" (1988: 265). This reference to members following a rational strategy coincides with the Canadian parliamentary system, which requires adherence to party discipline in order for MPPs or Members of Parliament (MPs) to move up the proverbial ladder. Party discipline, though intrinsic to political success in the Ontario Legislature, poses different constraints and incentives for MPPs in government and opposition. For ambitious government MPPs, opportunities for upward mobility serve as an effective motivational tool (Savoie, 1999: 337). In the face of such opportunities, MPPs must come to terms with the Premier's inherent right to appoint and dismiss them at will. This enforces a strong accountability relationship between the Premier and his/her caucus of existing and hopeful Cabinet Ministers (Savoie, 1999: 344).

Savoie quotes a former federal Minister who said that sitting in Cabinet is '*quite a charge*' as they [MPs] have finally achieved their greatest ambition. Savoie goes on to stress the importance of being conservative at the Cabinet table to ensure survival and reaffirm the Premier's confidence in the MPP's ability to support his/her mandate. However, this may prove more difficult for the few ambitious politicians with a more radical style and even bigger dreams of party leadership (1999: 343). "*Few [politicians] push for acceptance of new ideas, they tend to endorse, repackage or resurrect concepts...*" implying that the majority of politicians who reach a position of influence often shy away from rocking the boat. Members who employ radical tactics in Cabinet often face harsh criticism from the Party Whip and House Leader or even worse, the Premier (Loomis, 1988: 13). Savoie argues that in the absence of strong principles and ideologies, sitting in Cabinet becomes the end rather than the means for most Ministers due to the concentration of power in the Centre (Premier's Office or Privy Council) (1999: 241-242). The Premier exerts great control over his/her Ministers by dominating the policy and decision-making processes. Despite their limited capacity to direct discussions at the Cabinet table, Ministers are tasked with carrying out challenging and time-consuming assignments including frequent meetings with bureaucrats, media and stakeholders as well as promoting specific government projects. Additionally, Ministers are expected to undertake regular MPP tasks such as performing House duties and attending caucus meetings, while also going back and forth between the Legislature and the constituency (Savoie, 1999: 241-242). Ministerial posts reflect stature, prestige and influence; however, they also come with long hours and constant pressure. As a result, longevity in Cabinet can be regarded as its own reward in a competitive and fast-paced political environment where "*the machinery of government is such that Ministers are still encouraged to fight for their corner*" (Savoie, 1999: 272). The steady supply of eager MPPs on the backbench keeps potentially complacent, incompetent or incompatible Ministers on their toes.

Academic literature and popular culture identify politicians as ambitious and strategic creatures plotting how to get into power and stay there. Richard Rose, an American political scientist, claimed that "*a British politician does not set out to become a Cabinet Minister, but to enter the House of Commons. Experience in the Commons does not lead naturally to the work of a Minister...*" (Riddell, 1993: 268). Rose's statement implies that parliamentarians do not actively seek out Ministerial appointments while

also implying that the position requires a certain skill set not possessed by all those elected to the House. It is therefore important for the Premier or Prime Minister to take several factors into consideration when Cabinet-making including the capacity of potential Ministers to stay out of trouble with the media and skilfully handle Question Period. Since the injection of public agents like the media into the Legislature, the internal dynamic has undoubtedly changed. The media no longer narrates or acts as a spectator, it has evolved into an important political actor with critical insights on the process and its participants. The Centre has therefore become very cautious of and sensitive to media-inspired developments with the potential to trigger political problems and embarrassments (Savoie, 1999: 338-339). Loomis describes this rapport between MPPs and the media: *“legislators and journalists maintain both adversarial and symbiotic relationships, with the latter coming to dominate most communications”* (Loomis, 1988: 80-81). This acknowledges a mutual need between the two groups as they both possess information and resources required by the other to perform their respective duties. Though this relationship is sometimes volatile, it is fundamental to enforcing the democratic principles of parliamentary politics by keeping elected officials accountable and accessible to the public.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study was designed to explore the changes associated with Ontario Ex-Ministers remaining in the Legislature. Qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were used to identify patterns within data collected from interviews. Qualitative interviews are typically rich in detail, sensitive to context and capable of showing the complex processes or sequences of social life – all of which are at the heart of this research. This methodology therefore facilitated the identification of broader themes in addition to stimulating a better understanding of the political lives of Ex-Ministers by obtaining a more realistic picture as opposed to testing a causal hypothesis. Interviews were conducted between January and April 2011 with two groups of participants: Ex-Ministers and public agents. These groups were interviewed using a semi-structured interview methodology based on a standard survey to ensure uniformity, though follow-up questions varied based on participant responses. The first group consisted of Ex-Ministers while media representatives, consultants and lobbyists populated the second group. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for each group are described below.

Based on predetermined criteria for the first sample, the Ex-Ministers would have left Cabinet under circumstances including personal resignation from the Ministerial post or as a result of a Cabinet shuffle. Ineligible participants would have left Cabinet for reasons including defeat of government (based on electoral results or failure of budget bill to pass in the House), personal electoral defeat, retirement from the Legislature or death. An additional criterion of eligibility required participants to remain in the Legislature for a minimum of one parliamentary session after leaving Cabinet, while their party remained in power. This researcher acknowledges that the sample size could have been enlarged with a broader definition of Ex-Ministers; however, these stipulations created a niche group of parliamentarians, which has not been thoroughly examined in contemporary political science research. This study sample therefore included participants capable of providing insight on the nuances associated with power shifts within ruling political parties at Queen’s Park. Ex-Minister participants who met the criteria as outlined above were recruited from a list created by the researcher. Contact was made with the staff of these MPPs requesting a 20-30 minute interview, all of which were conducted in person. Eleven Ex-Ministers agreed to participate in this study: seven were Liberals, two were New Democrats and one was a Progressive Conservative. Some of these interviews were recorded with the understanding that no attributions would be made to any individual. Participants were asked about their motivations in running for provincial office as well as reasons used to encourage them by external

actors. They were also asked to describe any political aspirations before entering Cabinet, perceived reasons for their appointment as well as the impact of Cabinet experience on their current legislative role(s) and relationships in the House (interview questions are outlined in Appendix 1). These interviews provided an avenue for the researcher to gauge changes in their perceptions and behaviours based on self-assessment claims as well as public interpretations explored in successive interviews with public agents.

The second sample (public agents) was based on a convenient sampling of media representatives, consultants and lobbyists. The researcher created a list of potential participants and contacted each to obtain consent for an interview. Five public agents agreed to participate in this study: two were journalists (media), two were consultants and one was a lobbyist. These interviewees were asked to describe their working relationships with current backbenchers, Ministers and Ex-Ministers as well as the ways in which they believe Cabinet influences stakeholder management and outreach practices of Ex-Ministers. This provided an alternative lens to view and examine the dynamic between Ex-Ministers and other political actors within the confines of the Legislature (interview questions are outlined in Appendix 2). For the purposes of this paper, these interviewees have been regarded as ‘public agents and interpreters’ since their professional duties require frequent interaction with MPPs and political staff as well as prolonged stays at Queen’s Park. This implies an awkward intimacy between the two groups as they need each other to effectively perform their duties but must remain at arm’s length to protect their individual interests. These ‘public interpretations’ serve as a barometer for the expanding gulf between public expectations and political reality (Docherty, 2005: 61).

It should be noted that while these interviews facilitated information-gathering for research purposes, they also offered participants an opportunity for personal reflection on the culture of Queen’s Park. The researcher has relied as much as possible on the participants’ views in the construction of the overall narrative. It was not the objective of this paper to divulge how or why these MPPs became Ex-Ministers but rather to highlight how Cabinet has influenced their perception of and participation in political life post-pinnacle. This research has attempted to develop the subjective meanings of their experiences into themes indicative of broader theories of social behaviour. Raw interview data for both groups was reviewed to identify codes, which represent key messages conveyed by participants. These codes were compared and contrasted to determine those that were distinct or repetitive. During the coding stage, relevant quotations were flagged to articulate participants’ views on certain topic areas. Subsequent to this, codes were grouped by content area to illustrate the range of issues addressed across interviews. These groupings are established as categories from which a few overriding themes connecting to the research question and study rationale have been developed. Two themes have been identified and they are briefly described as: (i) Accidental Ministers and (ii) Ex-Minister engagement and influence. They are embedded in this paper’s discussion of each stage of the parliamentary career. It is the hope of this researcher that the findings of this research will advance public understanding of the complexities associated with seeking, achieving and moving on from political leadership in the Ontario Legislature.

In Search of Cabinet

Riddell claims that *“politics is, after all, a career for the unusually ambitious”* as he seeks to understand how participants endure an arbitrary and sometimes brutal process which boasts fewer rewards at the top (1993: 237). This speaks to the need for resilience in order to advance and survive in the political world which seems to deter the faint of heart. However harsh this description may seem, one cannot deny that navigating the *‘natural hierarchy’* within legislative assemblies takes immense self-assurance (Docherty, 2005: 47). The informal and formal pecking order demands that those with political aspirations of holding senior posts display exceptional personality traits, skills and knowledge to gain the

confidence of their colleagues and leader. This sometimes involves grandstanding in front of the media or backroom politicking if one does not happen to fit into the current Cabinet formula. *"The position that a member holds in the legislature is probably the single most important determinant of the extent of his or her possible participation. In Canadian legislatures, Cabinet is the opportunity for individuals to realize their personal political ambitions"* (Docherty, 2005: 49). In this excerpt, Docherty validates the belief that the allure of Cabinet is alive and well in Canadian legislatures as politicians seek a platform for implementing their campaign promises as well as broader policy changes. It is therefore understandable that politicians may enter the Legislature with hopes of entering Cabinet, possibly regarded as a position of personal and/or professional success depending on the individual. This is usually the tipping point where these ambitious politicians, who adjust their behaviour to reflect Ministerial potential, get branded as having a one track mind. However, this researcher would argue that the pursuit of Cabinet reflects the humanity of politicians who aspire to advance in their profession. It just so happens that this advancement is accompanied by tremendous influence, power and prestige, thus triggering suspicion among less ambitious colleagues, inquisitive public agents and disproving constituents. Onlookers begin to question the motives of MPPs seeking Cabinet, wondering if those who have succeeded worked to be appointed or were appointed to work.

All of the Ex-Ministers interviewed insisted that there was no implicit strategy that guided their political career to the Cabinet room. Some participants stated no expectation of professional rewards from working within the Legislature, *"I wasn't looking for any financial or statutory rewards"* stated a Progressive Conservative Ex-Minister. This insistence that each Ex-Minister stumbled into Cabinet emerged as a theme throughout the interviews. This theme relates to the findings of a Samara study, which found that most former MPs indicated an accidental (meaning an unexpected or unplanned) entry into politics. Researchers deduced that this may have been a result of a belief that politics is something for which one cannot admit ambition, even after the fact (Samara, 2010: 4). Though ambition is regarded as a natural ingredient of politics, especially by external parties, most of the Ex-Ministers who participated in this study cited no initial anticipation or desire for Cabinet, making them 'Accidental Ministers'.

Party discipline plays a major role in the initial stages of one's political career as the Premier may provide backbenchers with an opportunity to move closer to the Centre with '*junior positions*' such as Parliamentary Assistants (PAs). At the outset of a parliamentary career such a position may be used as '*testing ground for future Cabinet Ministers*' (Docherty, 2005: 48), giving MPPs a stage on which to display their skills and talents. It should be noted that individuals selected to perform these duties are '*not likely to step outside of party lines*', according to Docherty since they are now one step closer to a seat in Cabinet (2005: 48). Though one cannot generalize how Cabinet appointments are made, *"...the selection and promotion of Ministers follows a common pattern in which most have served a lengthy apprenticeship before entering the Cabinet"* (Riddell, 1993: 187). Riddell contends that an apprenticeship, as a PA or even regular backbencher, allows potential Cabinet Ministers to display their capacity to fulfill their roles as Ministerial aides. In the interviews, Ex-Ministers identified several personal goals upon entering the Legislature, most of which related to policy development and reform on behalf of their constituents. One Liberal Ex-Minister recounted that he *"expected opportunities to have an input on social policy relating to poverty, health and education"*. Surprisingly, most did not identify Cabinet as the most effective avenue for achieving these goals. Instead, these participants opted to emphasize that Cabinet did not constitute more than a fleeting thought prior to their appointment. Loomis would classify these Ex-Ministers as '*policy entrepreneurs with a complex mix of motivations*', since interview findings indicate a pattern of desire to participate in the policy process but reluctance to actively pursue (or a genuine disinterest in) Cabinet (1988: 106). Savoie's research furthers this by

pointing out that there is a minority of MPs who are content and satisfied with their role and duties outside of Cabinet (1999: 83). A seat in Cabinet can be understood as a natural desire for politicians since it provides substantially more policy influence, authority and broader public profile (Docherty, 2005, 63). However, it is important to recognize that Docherty's arguments mostly relate to the federal Parliament and thus may (in some cases) hold less credence at the provincial level. The Ontario Legislature hosts a significantly smaller caucus for each party with MPPs who secured a nomination and were successfully elected on their local profile and community recognition. Media participants in the public agent interviews stated that they believed readers were less inclined to care about the Ministerial title or status especially outside of large urban centres like Toronto. *"Readers don't care about Cabinet, they decide if they like or hate MPPs without the Cabinet status"* stated one Queen's Park journalist. They argued that people mostly identify with their local representative and engage in discussions on contentious wide-sweeping issues like taxation, health care and education. Though Cabinet provides a palpable platform from which to speak, MPPs in the Ontario Legislature may bend the ear of the public and even the media if they are tenacious in their efforts.

When in pursuit of Cabinet, MPPs are often vigilant of contenders who may be gaining influence with the Premier. Signs of ascendancy, according to Savoie, may include special assignments, sitting on ad hoc committees, and attending special advisory meetings (1999: 345). The Premier must maintain a delicate balance in selecting his/her executive in order to ensure fairness, representation and compatibility. Some Ex-Ministers readily identified practical factors like geography, gender, ethnicity and language, which contribute to Cabinet-making while others identified more personal attributes like their *'energy and enthusiasm'* as mentioned by one Liberal Ex-Minister. Varied responses to the question of why they were appointed illustrated the dichotomy between Ex-Ministers who reflected on their experience pragmatically versus those who were more sentimental about their involvement in Cabinet. Riddell informs readers of the challenges of political leadership as *"Prime Ministers also do not want to leave too many angry and frustrated opponents on the back benches...they will probably do more harm outside than inside the Cabinet"* (1993: 195). This offers some explanation as to why MPPs considered the natural choice for Ministerial posts may be passed over during a Cabinet shuffle. MPPs with previous experience in municipal politics or government positions may also emerge as potential Ministers (Riddell, 1993: 194-195) as these individuals have already displayed successful engagement in the political process. Not surprisingly, the majority of the Ex-Ministers who participated in this study held municipal office prior to running for a provincial seat. Newly-formed governments may also *"...pick their initial Cabinets from those who formed the Shadow Cabinet before the general election. The criteria for shadow are loosely based on ability as potential Cabinet Ministers"* (Riddell, 1993: 196). Riddell offers the argument that even in opposition, MPPs consider the next phase of their political career should the tide suddenly turn in their favour. Two Liberal Ex-Ministers felt their performance as opposition critics greatly influenced the Premier's decision to appoint them to Cabinet. This further supports the point that irrespective of what side of the House your party sits on, an ambitious politician may set his or her sights on a seat at the illustrious Cabinet table to achieve his or her personal and professional goals.

Sitting on top of the world?

Public agent interviewees were asked if there was a hierarchy among elected officials they sought out when gathering information in their professional capacities and most identified the Premier and Cabinet as the head. One lobbyist stated that *"I typically go for the Premier's Office, then Cabinet, then the caucus based on who is influential, well-liked and considered an opinion leader"*. However, participants noted that this hierarchy was fluid and the target would sometimes vary based on the policy area or issue being discussed. These results further emphasize Docherty's point that *"Cabinet holds the greatest potential for rewarding both personal ambition and the desire to influence policy"* (2005: 57). Cabinet

provides the opportunity for Ministers to influence the agenda, policy strategy and implementation plans put forward by the Premier's Office, bureaucracy and external actors. Successful Cabinet Ministers are therefore typically generalists with a set of transferable skills necessary for effectively leading any portfolio that is assigned by the Premier (Riddell, 1993: 204). Some of these fundamental skills include negotiation, salesmanship, communication, stakeholder management and strategic planning. The aforementioned skills allow Ministers to address existing and emerging issues with political acuity by organizing their thinking around the goals outlined in their mandate letter. Savoie also states that *"the secret to being a successful Minister is to know how to circle an issue without landing or, better yet, perhaps, to know when to land"* (1999: 239). One NDP Ex-Minister mentioned that Cabinet cultivated his oratory skills, as he gradually became an expert at preparing for debates and speeches. It is very important for Ministers to retain the confidence of the Premier, who regards them as ambassadors for the government, by honing their skills while in office. Paikin recounts the experiences of one Cabinet Minister who found herself caught in the crossfire between the Opposition and the media (2003: 180). The Minister found her role particularly challenging as it forced her to constantly compete with her colleagues for resources. She alluded to changing relationships with backbenchers who took political decisions that affected their ridings personally. She admitted in her interview that her time in Cabinet, though exciting and fulfilling, was ultimately clouded with *"the fear of screwing up and making the Premier look bad"* (Paikin, 2003: 180). This speaks to the immense responsibility and pressure that comes with holding a senior political position, stressful enough sometimes to erode the confidence and collegiality of the legislators. One Liberal Ex-Minister expressed bittersweet feelings about being dropped from Cabinet: *"I felt a sense of relief since I was burning the candle on all three ends"*.

Cabinet Ministers take on several roles including leading a policy-making department by advocating for its mandate and resources, being responsible to Parliament for its operations and decisions as well as taking on the position of chief spokesperson to the public (within the Legislature and in the media). These roles require multiple and varied qualities and talents for Ministers to act as successful policy and political entrepreneurs capable of graciously advancing their personal and professional ambitions. Riddell supports this by stating that British Ministers are amateurs at running government departments but professionals at advancing political careers (1993: 208). This observation can be attributed to either the insights of the author or openness of British politicians in admitting to their political motivations. Savoie maintains that *"you can only become a successful Minister if you are a successful politician"* meaning re-election naturally takes precedence over (re)entering Cabinet. However, once a politician enters the Legislature and their party is in power, their focus shifts to joining the Centre and participating in decision-making (1999: 239-240). One Liberal Ex-Minister lamented the lack of a job description, feeling that there had been little support, training or guidance on how to effectively perform Ministerial duties. Despite the lack of formal direction on how successful Ministers act, political scientists have attributed longevity to stamina, energy, decisiveness and persuasiveness. White argues that longevity in Cabinet offers experience and seniority inadvertently adding to that individual's value (1998: 380).

Potential candidates are considered for appointment based on standard ideological, social, regional and personal considerations which will ultimately serve the interest of the leader and political party. With an understanding and mastery of these factors, personal ambition and luck, MPPs may trigger their own entrance and eventual exit from the Cabinet. *"Prime Minister, Deputy Minister – the job title becomes your new name. But, caveat emptor, best to remember these titles are on loan, you don't own them"* (Decter, 2010: 185). A steady turnover of Ministers is inevitable as the demand and supply for talent ebbs and flows. This political reality does present an additional layer of complexity for the Centre as *"the combination of high turnover and the importance of parliamentary performance means that Ministers*

concentrate on the short-term. Their priority is often to make a short-term reputation" (Riddell, 1993: 187, 209). This temptation to focus on short and mid-range planning may either enhance or jeopardize the party mandate. Additionally, fixed elections dates in Ontario place a potential expiry date on government policies, plans and projects. Interviewees supported Savoie's claim that former Ministers identified the capacity to secure funding and resources for their initiatives in their ridings and departments as their most productive and rewarding activities (1999: 345). This therefore becomes a legitimate concern for leaders who look for Ministers who can satisfy the immediate needs of their constituents without risking the long-term needs of the collective. Unfortunately for those Ministers who do not measure up in this respect, they are often forced to resign in a Cabinet shuffle. Riddell describes Harold Wilson's (prominent British Labour politician and former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom) experience by highlighting some of the negative consequences of Cabinet-making when Ministers are given no warning or explanation as to why they are being dropped from Cabinet: "...his [Harold Wilson] tendency to undertake changes in his team for no obvious reason created bitter resentment and instability" (1993: 193). The excerpt speaks to a common perception of Ex-Ministers as rightfully jaded as would be expected in the aforementioned scenario. This view was supported by most Ex-Ministers who rationalized the Premier's decision to shuffle them out of Cabinet. Two Liberal Ex-Ministers shared this view – one stated that *'they understood the need for the Premier to be forward-thinking as he cited the need to make changes in the Cabinet'*. This contrasted another Liberal Ex-Minister who felt he deserved more than a phone call and vague explanation of his (perceived) demotion. One NDP Ex-Minister claimed that he *"wondered about the rationale as well as his replacement in Cabinet"* after being told of his removal from Cabinet. Public agent interviews supported the view that Ex-Ministers typically get placed in the category of *'bitter and resentful'* but it is important to distinguish that these feelings were not expressed by all Ex-Ministers who participated in this study. It was those who were dissatisfied with the rationale or lack of rationale that harboured feelings of disappointment.

Post-Pinnacle

Though Ex-Minister participants did not cite Cabinet as the apex of political influence, some did identify Cabinet as a time of high personal and professional success on the graphical question in the survey. This may be an indication of a level of discomfort in verbalizing Cabinet as the pinnacle. Though this is an interesting finding it is outside the focus of this study which seeks to understand the post-Cabinet experience. Riddell argues that *"Politics is an extreme example of an occupation – like sport or the performing arts – where life at the top can be relatively brief and the process of decline can be bruised"* (Riddell, 1993: 237). This implies that while this career may attract the most dedicated and resilient citizens who constantly strive for success, they may not be fully prepared for political descent. As euphoric as the rise to the upper echelons of the Ontario Legislature may be, the fall may seem dreadful should one choose to remain in the House as an Ex-Minister. White describes the three elements of a typical ministerial career as learning to be a Minister, operating as an established Minister and preparing for exit from Cabinet (1998: 380). This argument further legitimizes the need for MPPs to consider, prepare and accept descent from this 'top'. John Carr Munro (former Liberal MP from Hamilton) expressed a fear of isolation upon return to the backbench after years in Cabinet, which is understandable to the casual outsider. For some, the backbench might as well be a trip to the *'political graveyard'* since they are no longer at the helm of decision-making (Paikin, 2003: 30, 43). Though all MPPs may secretly share this feeling, it is what they do with this feeling that distinguishes one from the other. From the Ex-Minister interviews, the researcher found three distinct personalities among participants: the Maverick, the Valedictorian and the Good Soldier (see Table 1). These personalities encapsulate their motivations for seeking provincial office, feelings with regards to their time in Cabinet,

mindset or approach to determining how they will impact policy in their current positions as well as the trajectory of their future careers. Reshuffles are an inevitable part of the political game. Just as an up-and-coming politician may possess Cabinet aspirations, they must realistically face the possibility of their return to the backbench (Riddell, 1993: 205). Most Ex-Minister participants described their exit from Cabinet in the common saying 'one day you're in, the next day you're out'. One journalist further commented on this by stating that "*Ministers sometimes take themselves too seriously and need to understand the fleeting nature of power*". This person's comment was particularly insightful as they alluded to the possibility of Ex-Ministers projecting their feelings of inadequacy and withdrawal onto the public who place little stock in their titles.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

The idea that "*being appointed a parliamentary secretary is seen as a consolation prize instead of a promotion*" may prove true for disappointed Ex-Ministers and MPPs who have never been in Cabinet and are therefore still in search of that ever-elusive 'top' (Docherty, 2005: 64). However, for some Ex-Ministers, the PA position provides an opportunity to remain close to policy development and reform in an area of particular interest to them. Interviews showed a range of emotions tied to PA positions: some thought it was equivalent to a condolence letter in the wake of what was perceived as a demotion while others regard it as another 'top' in their political career. One Liberal Ex-Minister remarked "*I had no interest in the PA position. I didn't want to play second fiddle to some rookie*". Similarly, public agent interviews showed a range of perceptions of Ex-Ministers holding a PA portfolio as one journalist maintained that she rarely sought out PAs for information-gathering while several lobbyists and consultants referred to PAs as '*influencers and opinion leaders*'. Loomis explains these opposing views among public agents by acknowledging that the media follows a different agenda and thus employs different strategies: "*Senators receive more attention than do members of the House. Most coverage of individual members is local, and most if this is favourable*" (1988: 80). Though this makes reference to the American political system, one can equate Senators with Cabinet Ministers (as well as the leader) – the primary targets for broad news coverage. One journalist stated that her newspaper '*pays little attention to government Ex-Ministers unless they are willing to give a good, disgruntled story*'. From these discussions emerged the theme of Ex-Minister engagement. Results showed a marked difference in opposition and government perspectives on the influence of Ex-Ministers in the House. Three opposition Ex-Ministers spoke at length about the value added by Cabinet experience in holding the government to account in Question Period and other public forums. Two government Ex-Ministers, however, lamented the 'limited influence and untapped potential' of backbenchers despite efforts to engage them in the policy process.

This research has unravelled many of the myths and assumptions about Ex-Ministers including the belief that they all disappear into obscurity on the backbenches, experience disenchantment and tension, thus distancing themselves from colleagues and opting to leave rather than pursue other positions of political leadership. Prior research acknowledges the importance of '*re-adjusting to the backbench when you've been on the front-bench*', in spite of potential difficulty (Riddell, 246: 251). Members may experience some disappointment at being dropped from Cabinet but they generally come to accept it as natural evolution. Both Liberal and NDP Ex-Ministers claimed to feel a sense of relief at the reshuffle, as they would no longer be bound to the infinite pressure, stress and demands of Cabinet. A Liberal Ex-Minister expressed this as "*an opportunity to re-focus and concentrate on constituency case work, outreach and events*". He also expressed a greater sense of independence in carrying out his legislative duties based on the suggestions of his constituents. British Conservative politician, Patrick Jenkin said in a BBC interview "*to be suddenly out of it [Cabinet], there are real withdrawal symptoms, real momentary pain,*

but no, not bitterness at all, because I understand absolutely what the Prime Minister had to do. She [Margaret Thatcher] had to bring new faces into the Cabinet" (Riddell, 1993: 253). Shaffir & Kleinknecht describe the process of coping with political loss as two-pronged: framing the loss so as to deflect responsibility for the outcome and undertaking new involvements or re-involvements (2002: 18). There was evidence of both in the interviews as some Ex-Ministers seemed reinvigorated or energized about upcoming constituency, PA or party related projects while others accepted culpability relating to a specific issue that became a source of contention. After overcoming the initial shock, they are not disillusioned, frustrated or embittered by not having this opportunity anymore. They are happy to serve their constituents in the Legislature and exercise what influence they have over the policy process. However, it is important to know that most Ex-Ministers view their Cabinet experience as a building block for both internal and external opportunities. So the public can relinquish their sympathetic or disapproving stares as Ex-Ministers often do quite well out of office (Riddell, 1993: 258). One Liberal Ex-Minister remarked that he was "*groomed to be the perfect consultant*", confident that he would have numerous opportunities outside of politics. Cabinet transforms MPPs into political insiders, who have had access to intimate knowledge of government planning and administration. Ex-Ministers argued that Cabinet has made them more '*effective backbenchers*' by drawing on Ministerial experiences and networks to act as facilitators and information sources to constituents.

Conclusion

This research has shown that there are no easily discernable patterns for a politician's journey to and from Cabinet. As for the post-Cabinet stage, which was the focus of this study, Ex-Minister participants expressed a strong collective narrative some of which implied the "*...opposite of what a traditional public perception of politicians as consummate insiders would have suggested*" (Samara, 2010: 13). Data analysis produced results which challenged knowledge claims about political culture, more specifically the way in which Ex-Ministers perceive themselves. "*Loss of Ministerial office after a shuffle...the rise up the Ministerial ladder is often cut short involuntarily, most politicians still look back with pride on what they have done. There is an acceptance that, along with the pain of defeat or disappointment, they recorded some achievement and would not have pursued any other career*" (Riddell, 1993: 236-237). Riddell's statement accurately captures the tone of the interviews with Ex-Ministers as well as public agents. This challenged the expectations and assumptions of the researcher that politicians are inherently strategic, overly ambitious and always plotting their next political coup. The findings of this study suggest that while the 'political machine' may possess the aforementioned qualities, it is possible for the people involved to somehow avoid strategizing only to stumble into greatness as 'Accidental Ministers'. Westen maintains that "*the political brain is an emotional brain*", though politicians may function in an environment that calls for unwavering objectivity and strategy to advance, this is not necessarily reflected in their behaviour (Westen, 2007: XV).

One can hazard a guess at what these MPPs brought to Cabinet since the quintessential politician brings political intelligence which includes emotional intelligence, empathy, the ability to emanate and elicit comfort, the ability to form coalitions, the ability to manage dominance hierarchies and general intelligence (Westen, 2007: 286). However, this paper explored the converse to discover what Cabinet brought out in these MPPs, placing them in one of three 'personality' categories. The interview responses were varied as some placed emphasis on the Cabinet experience making them more efficient and effective backbenchers.

This study also highlights the importance of efforts to engage, motivate and utilize the backbenches especially in the government caucus. Engagement is necessary to ward off self-destruction, sabotage, manipulation by the media or defection from the Legislature. Ex-Ministers act as *facilitators* to

constituents seeking to navigate the bureaucratic process, *information resources* for their colleagues and public agents like media, consultants or lobbyists seeking political insight as well as *tour guides* for rookie backbenchers not yet versed in Queen's Park procedures and practices. However, Ex-Ministers need to be nurtured as mentors. Their skills must be cultivated in order to maximize their potential to lead outside of Cabinet. PA positions, unfortunately, are not regarded highly by all and must be revamped as avenues for policy innovation, influence and reform at the hands of Ex-Ministers. Ex-Ministers need to advance past the role of stand-in or stunt double, as sometimes portrayed by opposition parties and the media to respected Ministerial confidantes and policy advisers.

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TABLES

Table 1: Categorization of Ex-Ministers

Category	Characteristics	Participants' party affiliation
The Maverick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically forge their own path • Notable entrance and/or exit from Cabinet • Does not necessarily regard Cabinet as the pinnacle of political career • Views Cabinet as a means of looking inside the political machine • Cabinet is not necessarily suited for them • Highly likely to pursue goals outside of the Legislature • Pragmatic about Cabinet experience 	Liberal New Democrat New Democrat
The Valedictorian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoroughly enjoyed Cabinet and identifies it as a time of high personal and professional success • Optimistic about political prospects for leadership role • Excited about next phase of political career 	Liberal Progressive Conservative
The Good Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great respect for the process, sentimental about cabinet experience • Aware of flaws and sees room for improvement in legislative process (including Cabinet) • Looks at current position as a chance to build on prior work • Accepting of natural evolution of politics • Does not harbour with Cabinet or leadership goals, constituency remains the focus • Concerned with individual skill-building and supporting the party brand 	Liberal Liberal Liberal Liberal Liberal New Democrat

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ex-Minister Questionnaire

Personal Profile

What motivated you to run for office?

Did anyone ask you to become active or recruit you to party politics? What reasons did they state for encouraging you?

What part of your role as politician in Legislature did you expect to find satisfying?

What sort of personal and professional rewards did you expect?

Pre-Cabinet

Can you describe your political aspirations before entering Cabinet? Did you consciously set out to join Cabinet?

Thinking back, could you please describe the circumstances surrounding your appointment into Cabinet? What was the nature of this/ these conversation(s)?

Why do you think you were selected to be a part of Cabinet?

Post-Cabinet

How do you perceive/describe your exit from Cabinet?

Describe the adjustment or transition period after leaving Cabinet.

How has Cabinet experience changed your outlook on the role of backbenchers, Ministers or the Premier?

Describe the impact of Cabinet experience on your role as MPP (capacity of public servant) as well as the role of backbencher (capacity of legislative officer)?

What kinds of effects has it had on your relationships with current Ministers, the Premier, backbenchers or external parties (media, lobbyists)? If so, describe these changes.

Are you treated differently at party/caucus meetings? If so, in what way?

What's next? What are your goals?

Can you place an X on the spectrum indicating how you perceive your Cabinet experience in relation to the next phase of your political career?

Internal Opportunity Building Block

Neutral

External Opportunity Building Block



Can you place the words pre, during and post on the diagram below indicating how you perceive your time in the Legislature before Cabinet, during Cabinet and after Cabinet?

High Professional Success



Moderate

High Personal Success

Appendix 2: Public Agent Questionnaire

Briefly describe what you do for a living and how it relates to the Ontario Legislature.

To what extent are relationships with MPPs and bureaucrats important to your professional duties?

How are these relationships formed and maintained?

What qualities do you look for in a government liaison (could be MPP, political staffer or OPS bureaucrat)?

Is there a hierarchy among elected officials you seek out in the Legislature when engaging in information gathering?

How accessible are Cabinet Ministers to you (journalists, lobbyists, consultants)? If they are not accessible, is there a next best thing? What or who?

Think back to an instance where you have engaged with Ex-Ministers for work reasons, did you notice any differences in their perceptions or behaviours as compared to backbenchers who have never been in Cabinet?

How does your working relationship with Ministers change once they resign or are shuffled out of Cabinet?

Are clients/readers more or less inclined to engage Ex-Ministers on issues?

Think back to an instance when you dealt with an MPP when he was a backbencher then Cabinet Minister then Ex-Minister...what changes have you witnessed in their perceptions, behaviours...if any?