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On the Record, Off-Script: Exit Interviews with Former MLAs in Nova Scotia

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On the Record, Off-Script: Exit Interviews with Former MLAs in Nova Scotia

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#OffScript

Introduction to the Springtide Collective



Intended Knowledge Outcomes



Motivations behind project



35 MLAs

Served from 1993-2013

23% Female; 77% Male

43% NDP; 20% Liberal; 37% PC

Mix of Backbenchers, Cabinet Ministers



Our Findings

3 Themes:

Feeling Lost and Powerless

Dysfunction

Exclusion



- ***Feeling Lost and Powerless***

“[serving on the] backbench, it's really like you're a child, you know, you've got to be seen and not heard, clap when you're supposed to clap and really limited influence unless you're willing to speak out... but then the price is you're not going to get into cabinet so backbench is a horrible place to be and there's no one I know who's ever been a backbencher has enjoyed it at all.”

“I would say 80 percent of my time was spent dealing with, you know, constituents' concerns, whether they're—especially in a rural riding that I represented, there's an awful lot of road issues, rural roads are huge. And, you know, people call they're looking for pavement, naturally, they want asphalt paving. There's only so many roads get paved every year and not all of them get done. But grading or gravelling or ditching or dust control or winter snow clearing, those calls never end for a rural MLA.”

- ***Dysfunction***

“I still don't understand the psychology or the sociology, the pack mentality that goes into the behavior that goes on in that legislature...It's one of the reasons I had to get out of politics is because it just eats away at your soul to be part of that, that's probably the best word, it's corrosive. It's like acid eating away at your soul, being in that place where people are acting so stupidly and so meanly and aggressively towards each other, its madness.”

- ***Exclusion***

Sometimes they would make underhanded racist remarks, right? Like, one of the guys said to me once, I was standing in line to get my lunch so I picked up a banana and he goes "oh, you like bananas do you? [name of another MLA from the African Nova Scotian community] liked bananas too." And I thought that was a very insulting remark, but I wasn't prepared for that. To me, I thought that people were above that sort of thing because these are people who somebody voted for. They weren't above that, that's for sure

One former cabinet minister told us the following story after she arrived at a sports event to represent the government. An official at the sports event was supposed to receive her and did not expect the cabinet minister to be female: “we pulled up and there was a parking place right by the door... there was a man standing there, looking very important, and he came running over and said “you can't park there! That's for the minister and he's not here yet!” I am the minister. You'd run into that more, and more, and more. You know, you can't start yet because the minister's not here yet. While I'm standing there. It happened more and more often than you can imagine. The people would expect there to be a man and then if I wasn't they didn't know quite what to do with me.”

*Sharing our Findings:
Podcast & series of reports*

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