

# **Liberal Party Succession Planning and Ministerial Resignations: Bridging political reality with administrative cleansing**

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**Abstract:** Walter Bagehot wrote in the 19th century about using ministerial resignations as a tool for cabinet rotation and ridding the cabinet of incapable members. Throughout the 20th century, more definition was given to the instances in which ministers should resign. Many of these reasons focused on the policy and administrative conduct of ministers. For the most part, governments would abide by the policy and administrative rules when deciding who should be removed from cabinet. This paper will explain how such decisions are “rational.” In examining the Canadian cases of ministerial resignations since 1968, there are several decisions for ministerial resignations that fall outside these rational decisions. One such trend is that of Liberal Party leadership hopefuls who seem more prone to resign not for policy or administrative lapses, but because they have been groomed to take over the leadership of the party. Over the 40 year period of this study, resignation decisions for Liberal Party leadership hopefuls have effectively become rational reasons for ministers to resign. This paper will use organizational theory to explain the phenomenon.

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## **1. Introduction**

Governments are organizations. They behave like organizations and they have characteristics like other organizations. Because of this, we can use organization theory to analyze government and our parliamentary institutions. Richard Daft (2001) suggests that organizations share the following characteristics. First, organizations are social entities. They exist because humans are individually incapable of achieving a desired outcome and so we pool our resources together to maximize our strengths to achieve collective goals. Secondly, organizations are goal directed. They have a purpose. They have a set of tasks that they need to accomplish, and for the most part, organizations should be restricted to those tasks that are associated with its original purpose of existence. Third, organizations are designed as deliberately structured and coordinated activity systems. This characteristic suggests some level of consistency between the structure of the organization, the goals and purpose that underlie these structures, and the social context in which the organization finds itself. We see this consistency particularly at the inception of the organization. Everything is designed to exist for a particular reason. This is not to say that organizations always remain consistent with their original purpose, quite the contrary. Organizations are prone to deviate from them over time.

One way to measure this change is to examine the decisions that affect the organization and whether those decisions stick to its original purpose. Decisions that are made that do not correspond with the original intention of the organization are deemed to have altered it. Conversely, decisions that do consider the original organizational principles mean that the organization has not changed. Such decisions are categorized in this paper as “rational.” They are rational because all organizational actors recognize the rules and apply them to the situation at hand. The decisions that do not correspond to underlying organizational principles are thus categorized as “non-rational.” Decisions that take some form of rationality, but ultimately deviate from the original purpose of the organization are categorized as hybrid. This categorization, which is further explained below, is an essential feature of this paper as decisions for ministerial resignations in Canada from 1968 to 2007 are categorized to determine their level of rationality.

The focus on ministerial resignations is designed to provide some insight into the practice of ministerial responsibility as a foundational principle in Canada. While ministerial resignations cannot explain everything related to ministerial responsibility, since the doctrine is concerned with more than simply who sits around the cabinet table, how and when ministers leave their portfolios is a major component of the principle. A minister resigning his or her seat is the ultimate form of responsibility, particularly for policy or administrative lapses. Studying the decisions that lead to these resignations thus becomes a useful means through which we can test the strength of the foundational principle.

Having now established the key features of this paper, namely applying the literature on decision-making to discover organizational change and analyzing ministerial resignations as a measure of ministerial responsibility, it is possible to elaborate on the main purpose of this paper, which is to examine leadership succession planning in the Liberal Party of Canada. After categorizing all the decisions for ministerial resignations, the focus will be on four cases (the resignations of Donald MacDonald, John Turner, Brian Tobin, and Paul Martin Jr.) that fall under the hybrid sub-categorization of “drift.” There are several reasons for limiting this discussion to four cases. First, this paper falls within a larger program of research that has analyzed government decisions regarding ministerial resignations in Canada and the United Kingdom. Upon analyzing those resignations associated with drift, three trends were apparent with one affecting the UK exclusively (sex scandals), the other affecting Canada exclusively (leadership succession planning), and the other affecting both (federalism and devolution). This paper is thus part of a series which are focused on explaining Canadian and British resignation cases associated with “drift.”

A second reason for focusing on the four aforementioned cases is to address a couple of gaps in the literature. The first gap is associated with the literature in “drift.” As elaborated below, Barbara Carroll (1995) suggests that the presence of drift has perverse organizational consequences. The principal question that this paper seeks to address is whether Liberal Party leadership succession planning is a perverse organizational consequence for parliamentary democracy in general and ministerial responsibility in particular? The answer to this question points to the second gap in the literature. What organization theory has not yet explored is the potential of overlapping organizational elements. In the case of leadership succession planning, there is one organizational reality that focuses on changing the leadership of the prime minister and

the government, but there is also a different organizational reality that is concerned with party leadership. Since the prime minister is both head of government and leader of his or her political party, we have to be concerned with the organizational realities of both. They are overlapping because one person is the leader of both, and one cannot be the head of government without first being a leader of a political party. Because of the need to address this gap in the literature, this paper is only focused on leadership change during two long periods of the Liberals being the governing party.

The principal argument that is advanced in this paper is that we cannot suggest that the presence of drift in leadership succession planning is necessarily a perverse outcome because of the overlapping nature of the two organizations which are so crucial to the formation of the government. It ought to be proposed that government is the best place to study the presence of these overlapping organizational realities because few organizations face the same issue whereby one person is simultaneously the leader of two separate organizations which are interrelated by nature. Thinking about government in terms of these overlapping organizational realities is how we can bridge the political reality with administrative cleansing.

This paper will first examine rational and non-rational decision-making. The focus under rational decision-making will be in outlining the rules that help us categorize decisions that are consistent with the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. Such a discussion is necessary in order to explain how the decisions that are categorized as drift were not part of the original rules. After outlining some of the theoretical perspectives, this paper will discuss the resignation cases of MacDonald, Turner, Tobin and Martin to explain how they do not conform to the rational decisions and are categorized as drift. The final part of this paper will discuss these findings and the implications for not only ministerial responsibility but for organization theory as an explanatory tool.

## **2. Rational decision-making and drift**

Because there are many definitions of “rational,” it is necessary to define what it means within the context of this study. In terms of decision-making, rational models suggest that most decision makers would agree on the problems and the solutions to those problems if each of them are given the same information and understanding of the context from which the decision is going to be made. This suggests a certain degree of consistency among these decisions. Decision makers desire to make the best possible decision and are therefore interested in extracting the maximum value for their decisions given their constraints (Robbins, Coulter, and Langton 2005).

James March (1997) suggests that there are four assumptions on which rational decisions are based. The first is that there is knowledge of alternative decisions. This means that decision-makers not only understand that there is more than one choice, which is a requirement for any decision, but that the decision-maker is aware of all the possible alternatives to the course of action. Furthermore, rational decision-makers will have an understanding of the possible consequences of each potential course of action. This is to ensure that the course of action chosen is the best given the environment in which the decision is being made. Third, decision makers must have a consistent order of preference when it comes to the choices before them. This suggests that decision makers have consistent values that impact the choices that they would prefer. Finally, decision

makers have rules that guide them to their final decision. These rules consider the preferences and the most likely outcome possible is usually the one to be selected.

The presence of rules is an important feature of how this study defines rational, and is most closely aligned with how Max Weber (1947) saw rationality in bureaucracies. Weber thought that bureaucracies must be rational organizations. According to Weber, bureaucracies make decisions based on rules that are developed to guarantee organizational objectives. Because the decisions ought to be based on rules and practices that are well known and revisited to produce consistency, future decision-makers have an understanding of the decision to make when encountered with a particular problem.

The key to this study is discovering precisely what these rules are. There are many clues in the theory and practice of parliamentary systems. As ministerial responsibility is seen as foundational principle, there are 19<sup>th</sup> century writers that have focused on defining the term. In speaking of the virtues of permanent bureaucracies, Walter Bagehot (1872) outlines one of the reasons for having ministerial responsibility as a foundational principle, and it also becomes one of the rules involved with ministerial resignations. Because permanent bureaucracies have a tendency to primarily focus on internal needs rather than the provision of a public service, cabinet rotation becomes a check against bureaucratic self-absorption. New ministers are supposed to bring new perspectives to their jobs, and that is how this problem is addressed in the Westminster parliamentary model. The first rule then is that the government desires people to move in, out, and within cabinet.

Practitioners of parliament have also explained some of the rules involved with ministerial resignations. There are a number of cases, mostly from the UK, that explain some of these rules. The first is the Crichton Down affair in the UK. In this case, the Minister of Agriculture, Sir Thomas Dugdale, was asked to resign because of a botched land deal (Nicholson 1986). The government purchased land from farmers during World War II so that they could use the land for the Royal Air Force to practice bombing targets. When the government attempted to make good on a promise to return the land to the people, it had increased the value of the land beyond that which was originally paid for it, and out of the price range for farmers to repurchase. It was argued that the officials working for the government were acting in bad faith and that the responsibility for this rested on the minister of agriculture whose ministry was put in charge of the lands to be leased to farmers (Nicholson 1986). There was nothing illegal about the process, but there was certainly the feeling of poor public administration within the department (Wade 1967).

One of the important questions of the case is to what extent should a civil servant's job be protected in order to maintain political neutrality of the permanent bureaucracy? The answer to this question was initially mixed, however, Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell Fyfe set out his view of the convention of ministerial responsibility, and it speaks to some of the rules that are still referenced today. Fyfe discussed a list of scenarios that outlined how responsibility should be assigned. The first category relates to a minister who orders a civil servant to do a task; in such a circumstance the minister must protect the civil servant who is carrying out the minister's order. If something should go wrong, the minister should take the responsibility for giving the order.

The second category relates to a civil servant complying with a policy established by the minister. In this case, the minister must protect and defend the civil servant for any wrongdoing. The third category relates to problems within the ministry that are not significant or important, but are merely bureaucratic mistakes that cause delay. Under this scenario, the minister accepts the responsibility on behalf of the ministry, but he or she is not personally involved and does not need to resign. The minister only needs to state that corrective action will be taken, and not expose the official to public criticism. Nobody loses their position in this scenario. Improvements in the policy are all that is needed.

The fourth category moves the onus of responsibility onto the civil servant. In essence, when the civil servant does something seriously wrong, of which the minister disapproves, and when the minister has no prior knowledge of the act, then he or she does not need to defend the conduct of the official or the errors committed by the official. There is no obligation on the part of the minister to be bound by these misdeeds. However, the minister, under the convention of ministerial responsibility, must explain what has happened and provide an accurate account of how the situation was dealt with. The civil servant, in this sense, must bear the responsibility for his or her action. Fyfe argues that it is up to the minister to decide what to do, because it is only the minister who can evaluate the situation and hear all sides of the problem, including the defence.

The final category relates to the growth and size of government and the difficulties of keeping track of all that governments do, especially for ministers who are charged with ministries that are too big to control. The argument is that ministries are so big that ministers cannot possibly know all that is going on in them. Regarding this problem, Fyfe offers a number of suggestions to get beyond this impasse. First, the minister should provide instructions as to how a policy is to be carried out. Second, the minister can provide instructions to civil servants of what constitutes important matters, and when such matters should be brought to the minister's attention. Finally, the House has oversight on the minister's business. In essence, this problem can be circumvented by holding the minister responsible for the delegation of authority. If the minister's management style is flawed, the minister is responsible for that flaw. Table 1 summarizes Fyfe's relationships.

There is yet a different matter that was not covered by Fyfe but is also part of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, and this matter is typified by the John Profumo affair. The controversy with this case surrounded the extramarital relationship of Profumo who was the Secretary of State for War. He had started a relationship with a showgirl, Christine Keeler, and she was also involved with a well known spy at the Soviet Embassy. This aroused national security concerns due to the nature of the Cold War. When asked about the allegation in the House, Profumo immediately denied the extent of their relationship and vowed to sue for slander and libel for any statements that were made outside the House where MPs were no longer immune from prosecution for making such allegations. The embattled minister finally resigned from office in June of 1963 when the allegations first came to the surface in March of that year. His reasons were particularly related to how he misled parliament and the government.

*Table 1: Administrative – Political Relationships*

Scenario	Action
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<i>Minister gives civil servant a task</i>	Minister must protect civil servant and is personally responsible for delegating authority
<i>Civil servant complies with government policy</i>	Minister must protect civil servant and is responsible for any problems associated with the policy
<i>Civil servant makes a minor bureaucratic mistake</i>	Minister accepts responsibility but does not need to resign. The minister only needs to take corrective action
<i>Civil servant makes a serious mistake in which the minister disapproves</i>	Minister does not need to be personally responsible for the misdeeds, but has a duty to provide an honest account of the situation

Diana Woodhouse (1997) suggests that there is one obligation that all ministers must uphold. That is the duty to give information when requested, and also to provide an explanation for that information. As Woodhouse (1997, 264) suggests “the duty of Ministers [is] to give information about their areas of responsibility to the House and its Committees and not knowingly to mislead it.” This is something that Profumo failed to do, as he repeatedly misled the House of Commons and members of his own government as to the severity of the situation despite being asked several times to account for it. Norman Lewis and Diane Longley (1996) frame the problem as one of ministerial integrity. Without the integrity of ministers, there is no way to ascertain whether mistakes have been made, or whom to blame when they are discovered. Once a breach of integrity is found, governments do not want to keep such people. They are obvious liabilities. This thus becomes another rule that ministers are expected to follow.

Lying to or misleading parliament is a grave mistake and cabinet cannot have a member who cannot be trusted. This relates to the concept of cabinet solidarity. Ministers comprise the government, and they must collectively have consensus on what constitutes government policy. This is evident during times of policy change. When a government introduces a policy, all cabinet ministers must be behind that policy. The question that comes from the James Callaghan case is who is ultimately responsible for an unpopular policy reversal by the government.

A reference to context is necessary at this point. The British Labour government in 1967 had been opposed to a policy that would devalue the currency. They even campaigned against it. However, they soon reversed that policy based on the advice and evidence presented to cabinet by James Callaghan, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Cabinet debated the proposal and accepted it. The government policy had shifted. The opposition called on Callaghan to resign, but upon his explanation that cabinet accepted the decision, the opposition turned its sights on the government. Opposition member Sir Keith Joseph stated that “the responsibility must be pinned firmly on the Chancellor but, above all, on the Prime Minister.” Because the Prime Minister is the head of cabinet and government, he or she must take responsibility for the policies of his or her government. Therefore, while the advice for devaluation came from one cabinet member, at the end of the day the whole government is responsible for allowing the policy to change directions. The phrase ‘cabinet sinks or swims together’ is typically

associated with such a circumstance. In the end, Callaghan did not have to resign, and the government was left to deal with the consequences.

Cabinet solidarity has implications for this discussion on rational reasons for ministerial resignations. If a member of cabinet, for whatever reason, decides that he or she cannot support a policy agreed to by the rest of cabinet, then that minister should resign. This condition must be present if cabinet solidarity is to exist. This is not to say that there are never disagreements in cabinet about policy. There are policy disagreements quite frequently, but they take place outside the public eye. However, once the government as a whole makes a policy decision public, all of the disagreements and reservations that other ministers had must be set aside to show the public that the government is united and speaks with one voice on the decisions it makes.

There is one other reason that did not emerge in the discussion above, but they are also reasons to resign, and this includes instances when ministers break the law. These are based on convention, and they are not mentioned in the cases above because they have historically been acknowledged as resignation reasons.

The above discussion provides us with a list of reasons for when ministers should and should not resign, which is summarized in Table 2. We expect that ministers who violate these rules should resign, and we expect that governments who have reluctant ministers who violate these rules to seek resignations when ministers may be reluctant to resign because of it.

*Table 2: Reasons for ministerial resignation*

<i>Cabinet rotation and bringing new ministers into the government ranks</i>
<i>Minister gives civil servant a task and carries out the order that does not appear to be appropriate</i>
<i>Civil servant complies with government policy, which is questioned</i>
<i>Minister misleads parliament</i>
<i>Policy disputes with the government</i>
<i>Breaking the law</i>

The principal reason for elaborating on the definition of “rational” and the conditions to which they apply to ministerial resignations is because organizations shift overtime to make some things that perhaps were not initially rational reasons for ministerial resignations become such. In other words, are there any new conditions that might now pose as rational reasons for ministerial resignations? Those decisions that are categorized as drift may be considered new reasons for ministerial resignations that did not previously exist. Once we detect these newer reasons, we can then analyze them to see if they perversely affect the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility as reflected in cabinet resignations.

To understand how we can analyze whether these newer rational decisions end up creating perverse organizational outcomes, we turn to Barbara Wake Carroll and

Terrance Carroll (1980) who suggest that rational decisions applied to problems that are understood and defined in organizations can lead to opposite solutions, or what is called “program drift.” The definition of program drift “is the cumulative effect of a series of rational actions which, taken individually, correctly respond to the problem under consideration but which collectively produce either no solution, or the wrong solution, to the original problem” (Carroll 1995, 21). Drift implies that individual changes to organizational structure, provided they are rational in the short term, may have the net effect of significantly altering the original and intended purpose of an organization. The reason for this is that while a decision may correctly respond to a short term problem, the decision has not been made with consideration to the organizational rules. This, in turn, creates more rules which, according to the theory, end up being inconsistent to the original rules. This inconsistency ends up moving the organization further from what was originally created. The major emphasis of this paper is to evaluate the perverse nature of decisions that are categorized as drift.

### 3. Method and Results

In order to decipher which cases were categorized as drift, this research uses a matrix of decision-making (Leone 2009; Leone 2008; Leone and Flynn 2006). The matrix compares six models of decision-making (rational, mixed-scanning, drift, incrementalism, “groping along,” and the garbage can model) according to four characteristics of decisions (level of consensus, knowledge of cause and effect relationship, the permanence of the decision, and whether the decision is linked to other decisions) The matrix is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Decision-making matrix

	Is there consensus?	Is cause/effect known?	Can decision be changed?	Are decisions linked?
<b><i>Rational Model</i></b>				
Rational/planning	Yes	Yes	Yes-No	Yes-No
<b><i>Hybrid Models</i></b>				
Mixed Scanning	Yes	No	Yes	No
Drift	Yes	No	No	Yes
<b><i>Non-Rational Models</i></b>				
Incremental	No	No	Yes	Yes
Groping	No	Yes	Yes	No
Garbage Can	No	No	Yes-No	No

Table 4: Ministerial resignations categorized by decision-making model in Canada

	<b>Trudeau (Liberal)</b>	<b>Mulroney (Conservative)</b>	<b>Chrétien (Liberal)</b>	<b>Martin (Liberal)</b>	<b>Harper (Cons)</b>



<b>Rational</b>	Paul Hellyer George McIlraith Eric Kierans Edgar Benson Gerard Pelletier Jean Marchand James Richardson Mitchell Sharp Ronald Basford Roger Simmons Francis Fox	Robert Coates John Fraser Marcel Masse (I) S. Blais-Grenier Andre Bissonette Roch LaSalle David Crombie Bernard Valcourt Alan Redway W. Wineguard Gerald Merrithew Robert De Cortet Jake Epp Marcel Masse (II) Benoit Bouchard	Andre Ouellet Roy MacLaren Shelia Finestone Sergio Marchi	J. Comuzzi	M. Chong
<b>Mixed Scanning</b>	Andre Ouellet (I)		Brian Tobin (I)		
<b>Drift</b>	Leo Cadieux John Turner Donald MacDonald John Munro	Sinclair Stevens Michel Coté Jean Charest	Brian Tobin (II) Paul Martin		
<b>Incremental</b>					
<b>Groping</b>				Judy Sgro	
<b>Garbage Can</b>			Sheila Copps Andy Scott Art Eggleton L. Macaulay		
<b>Outliers</b>	John Greene	Lucien Bouchard	David Collenette		

In order to categorize the resignation cases, content analysis was used to answer the questions listed at the top row of the Table 3. The texts that were analyzed were primarily the resignation letters that are typically exchanged between the prime minister and the departing member of his cabinet. Media reports were also analyzed in order to provide the context of each of the particular cases. To this end, the electronic databases of the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* were both examined for each of the cases. The results of the content analysis are summarized in Table 4.

The four cases of interest are highlighted under the drift category. Leone (2009) lists the coding rules associated with how each of the cases are assigned to their categories. Briefly, consensus is determined by an agreement or lack of disagreement between the prime minister and the departing cabinet minister within the texts and media sources consulted. Knowledge of cause and effect relationships is associated with the list of rules discussed in the previous section and summarized in Table 2. The third characteristic is whether the decision is likely to change. We can look for clues of this in the texts whereby a prime minister will allude to a future return of a cabinet minister in his reply to the resignation letter. Finally, links to previous resignation cases can usually be made by media reports that discuss resignation cases. These media reports will often make comparisons to similar cases and whether the prime minister is dealing with the situation in a similar way as the other cases. Linkage is partially a control for consistency.

As mentioned, this paper is only going to discuss the four cases that are categorized as drift that are associated with Liberal Party succession planning. The first of these is John Turner's resignation. Turner, who was the Finance Minister in Pierre Trudeau's government, officially resigned from cabinet to go back to private life. The move was said to be unexpected for Trudeau who had to consider a big cabinet shuffle to fill the gap. Despite the unexpected nature of the departure, Trudeau still accepted the reasons for resigning, denoting consensus. There was no speculation of cause and effect, since returning to private life is not one of the relationships listed in Table 2. The media were speculating that Turner's real desire was to replace Trudeau who had been prime minister since 1968 (see 12 September 1975 edition of the *Toronto Star*, A1). In terms of the temporary nature of the decision, there was no chance that Trudeau was going to invite Turner back to cabinet, and formally resigning as an MP was an expression that Turner did not wish to return to Trudeau's cabinet. Finally, there was a link particularly to the later resignation of Donald MacDonald that will be discussed below.

Donald MacDonald was a key member of Trudeau's cabinet. MacDonald officially resigned for personal and family reasons, but allegations from the opposition were rampant that the real reason was related to policy differences with the Trudeau Cabinet. He also harboured leadership ambitions, and this has been thought to be part of the reason for his resignation. In terms of consensus, it is difficult to ascertain whether this resignation had consensus. The 7 September 1977 edition of the *Globe and Mail* certainly suggested that Trudeau was sorry to see MacDonald go and wished him luck. Consensus is assumed to have existed. With the resignation, there was no mention of parliamentary tradition. In fact, MacDonald vigorously denied that his resignation was a result of a policy difference, which would have provided evidence of a cause and effect relationship relating to cabinet solidarity. There was also no mention of a desire to make room for new members. Therefore, evidence points to the conclusion that the resignation occurred either because it was an unplanned departure or to organize for the Liberal leadership race.

This was a permanent decision for MacDonald, as his response to reporters' questions about his future, which was published in the abovementioned edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A2), was that "I think this is the end of my political career." This obviously suggests that MacDonald believed that he would not be going back to Trudeau's cabinet. Also, the circumstances of the resignation and the timing make it an obvious link to John Turner.

The next two cases that are associated with drift and Liberal Party succession planning occurred during Chrétien's reign as prime minister. The first of these is the resignation of Brian Tobin, who was the Industry Minister. He officially resigned in January 2002 to return to private life and to spend more time with his family. Media reports suggested he did so because he harboured leadership ambitions and that Chrétien was looking like he was going to stick around for a while. The prospects of organizing a leadership bid from cabinet was becoming impossible in light of newly developed rules that Chrétien had implemented, and Tobin felt that his prospects for winning a leadership race were slim if he did so.

There appeared to be consensus on the matter between both sides, and nothing really suggests otherwise. However, there was no speculation on cause and effect to the extent that this resignation was desired. In fact, the reason Tobin was leaving office was

because it appeared that the door to the leader's job was not then open, and that it was difficult to build an organization as strong as the one developed by Paul Martin by sitting at the cabinet table. In a 15 January 2002 (A1) story appearing in the *Globe and Mail*, Tobin said that jockeying for the leader's job outside cabinet was a motivation for him to resign. It appears that his reason for resigning was related to a perceived lack of opportunity for him to progress through the ministerial ranks. Again, this is not part of the "rational" reasons to resign from office. There was no indication that Tobin would serve under Chrétien again, and so from that perspective, the decision was permanent.

The other drift resignation case in the Chrétien government involves his most powerful cabinet minister who harboured leadership ambitions. Paul Martin departed from the Cabinet about six months after Brian Tobin. This case was interesting because the former finance minister no longer supported the aims and ambitions of the prime minister who had decided to fight an upcoming leadership review and vowed to fulfill his full term in office. If Martin desired to challenge Chrétien, he would not be able to do so from his cabinet position. There was consensus on the point that the two could no longer work together. Martin had also mused that the writing was on the wall.

In terms of cause and effect relationship, in his letter to Martin in reply to his resignation, published in the 2 June 2002 edition of the *Toronto Star*, Chrétien said that he could no longer work with him on government policy. However, at a press conference, Chrétien said "This has nothing to do with the Department of Finance and the economic policies of the government. There were other problems that were making it difficult for him and difficult for me and we mutually agreed that it was time for him to leave" (*Globe and Mail* on 3 June 2002, A1). These "other problems" related to leadership ambitions. Various newspapers reported that Chrétien was increasingly displeased with ministers using their cabinet positions as a springboard for their leadership ambitions. For example, the 1 June 2002 edition of the *Toronto Star* (A1) stated that Chrétien was prepared to fire any minister who was abusing their government office. The decision to resign was deemed permanent. It would have been highly unlikely for this relationship to heal in enough time to allow Martin to return to the Chrétien cabinet. Finally, in terms of resignations due to leadership ambitions, Brian Tobin could be seen as somebody who resigned due to leadership ambitions.

The cases of MacDonald, Turner, Tobin, and Martin point to a clear case of drift. These resignations appear to be part of the Liberal Party succession planning. In order to prepare to take the helm of the Liberal Party, these potential candidates felt that it was best to resign and organize from private life rather than the government benches. Our attention will now turn to the implications of this both for the doctrine of ministerial responsibility and for the important organizational task of succession planning.

#### **4. Discussion**

The four cases discussed above have highlighted the fact that resignation rules have grown to now include Liberal Party leadership succession planning. Resigning from cabinet to organize for the leadership campaign has been a part of the doctrine since at least the late 1970s. Drift suggests that the net effect of a series of short term rational decisions that solve the problem that the organization has confronted ends up moving the organization further from its original conception. The short term rational problem that the resignations of MacDonald, Turner, Tobin, and Martin address is a void in leadership.

However, is this outcome perverse for ministerial resignations and responsibility as the theory of drift suggests?

One way to answer the question is by exploring what happens in comparative countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, ministers frequently resign cabinet to contest the leadership of the sitting prime minister (Leone 2009). However, the debate is often framed much differently in the UK than it is in Canada. If a minister resigns to contest a sitting prime minister in the UK, it is usually related to a policy dispute. The case of John Redwood's resignation from the John Major government is a good example of what happens in Britain (Leone 2009). Redwood resigned to contest the Conservative Party leadership after John Major resigned as leader in 1995 only to run to succeed himself. Redwood's resignation involved a deep policy split with Major as the departing minister preferred a more social conservative stance on many issues, such as laws pertaining to the age of consent for homosexuality, and was a eurosceptic insofar as he saw problems with European integration. This showed a deep policy split with the government and threatened cabinet solidarity. According to the matrix, this was a rational decision in the UK (Leone 2009).

There are two principal reasons that explain the different categorization of the resignation cases in the UK than in Canada. First, the way the resignations are framed are different. In Canada, it is usually about going back to private life. With Paul Martin's resignation, which perhaps most closely approximates the Redwood case in the UK, the difference between the minister and Chrétien was more personal than policy. Certainly, Martin and Chrétien agreed with each other on most of the major policy initiatives of the Liberal Party throughout the 1990s. Martin felt that his time had come to be the leader of the Liberal Party and thus organized against the PM. The second difference is the nature of leadership selection in both the UK and Canada. In the UK, leadership selection is based on parliamentary votes while the Liberal Party preferred (until recently) a delegated convention of party faithful to decide the fate of its leadership. The size and scope of organizing for the Liberal Party leadership is simply too large a task to do while maintaining cabinet duties. The Liberal Party organization requires a team of dedicated people who can deliver support and ultimately enough votes to win the leadership. This may be a reason why Liberal Party resignations for hopeful candidates may simply be a necessity.

What also ought to be said at this point is that a resignation does not invariably lead to a leadership bid. The cases of Donald MacDonald and Brian Tobin resigned to build their leadership teams, but once they embarked on the task, they noted that the task of winning against their respective frontrunner was too impossible to overcome. Also, it can be said that these leadership candidates might find the private sector more appealing and rewarding once they step out of the public spotlight. Once they do so, some ministers realize that they can do some of what they did in politics in lucrative private sector careers. MacDonald and Tobin both fit within that sentiment.

In keeping with that comparative spirit, we can also examine the Conservatives. Neither Kim Campbell nor Jean Charest formally tendered their resignations when they were campaigning to lead the Progressive Conservatives in 1993. Part of the answer might be found in the declining stock of the Conservative Party in 1993 with the emergence of both the Reform Party and the Bloc Québécois siphoning supporters away from the party. As a shell of its former self, and it is too hard to estimate how many

members the PC Party had in 1993 due to decentralized party lists, it was perhaps easier for the Conservative leadership candidates to vie for the top job of becoming prime minister without sacrificing ministerial duties. The Liberals, on the other hand, have had healthy membership numbers during leadership selection. For example, when Paul Martin was in the race to replace Jean Chrétien, media reports were suggesting that the Liberal Party membership had ballooned to an all time high of more than half a million members. The Conservative Party leadership race, which took place at roughly the same time as Martin's, garnered about half members as the Liberal tally. Although the numbers are hard to compare since the Liberal Party's leadership race occurred while that party was in power while the Conservatives were finding the newly merged party's first leader, the scope of the task at hand may point to a significant organizational difference between the two parties: The task of obtaining the Liberal Party's top job is more formidable, and requires more time and dedication.

This discussion leads to the answer of whether this situation is perverse to the principle of ministerial responsibility as it relates to resignations. Leadership selection is a dual process for governing parties. Not only is it necessary to find a competent replacement for the government, but it is also ideal to find a person who is capable of leading a political party. Because of the size and the scope of winning a Liberal Party leadership race, particularly when the party is in power as memberships are typically higher during these periods of time, then it is only necessary for a candidate to resign. If this is an organizational necessity from a party perspective, it becomes difficult to conclude that there are adverse consequences to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility since one needs to become a party leader before he or she can simultaneously lead a government.

From an organization theory perspective, there is a need to theorize on how analysts can measure organizational change when they have an overlapping organizational element that affects change. Moreover, it is difficult to make an objective assessment on the perverse nature of change when this overlapping organizational element is present and is at least equally as important. This is not to say that the theory of drift has lost its utility. What it does say is that there is a need to think about how overlapping organizational elements can and should be studied within the context of organizational change.

## **5. Conclusion**

More work is needed in terms of thinking about how we can study these overlapping organizational elements, particularly when the organizations require one person to simultaneously lead both organizations. This paper raises the theoretical problem that has been encountered when evaluating organizational change in a political system that has these overlapping elements. Because organizational change is measured by the consistency exhibited by the foundational elements, in this case, the rational rules associated with ministerial resignations, the discovery of a new rule points to organizational change. This paper has discussed how leadership succession planning on the part of the Liberal Party has created such a new rule. The cases that are associated with this new rule point to drift. In the short term, there is a rational reason to resign in order to run for the leadership of the Liberal Party, however, in the long term it is different than the pre-established rules for ministerial resignations. It is in this context

that this paper has assessed if the new rule causes a perverse consequence for ministerial resignations.

Because of the nature of studying organizations from a political science perspective, it is hard to accommodate the political reality of the situation. Simply put, the political reality sometimes means setting aside pre-established rules in order to maintain or re-gain an electoral advantage. What this paper indirectly highlights is that there is a political reality that can often factor into ministerial resignations that have different objectives than maintaining a doctrine simply for ensuring democratic administration. In addition to adding to the literature in organization theory to account for overlapping organizational elements, we also have to think about how to address the study of organizational change in government in conjunction with organizational change in politics. This paper has ultimately sought to build such a foundation.

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