

EP07 P1: ALLAN SCOTT

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] **Katie Jensen:**

Applaud is proud to showcase the dedication of those who make decisions for the greater good and strive to leave the world a better place. For all Canadians, all personal views expressed by guests and our hosts are their own. Applaud will continue to recognize those in public service. Offer a kaleidoscope of perspectives and operate in good faith to build trust with applaud members and all public citizens.

[00:00:31] **Allan Scott:**

A saying within the Ontario Public Service is, if you want gratitude, get a dog. Because a servant doesn't do it for gratitude or public recognition or anything like that. If you're good at your job, you will command quiet respect of your peers and that will be immensely valuable to you.

[00:00:53] **Katie Jensen:**

I'm Katie Jensen, and this is the Path of Public Service from Applaud, celebrating people who have spent their lives working in Ontario's public sector.

[00:01:02] **Allan Scott:**

I'm Allan Scott. I'm a retired Ontario public servant with over 30 years experience. I've worked in eight different ministries, and I think I hit every step on

the ladder, right up to Director, which is the level at which I retired.

[00:01:14] **Katie Jensen:**

Allan spent much of his career in roles that connected with operations, compliance, and policy analysis.

[00:01:21] **Allan Scott:**

These included regulations around suspect apprehension pursuits, what most people would call police chases.

[00:01:27] **Katie Jensen:**

He's had flexibility and many new adventures through his work.

[00:01:30] **Allan Scott:**

One of the great things about being a public servant is you can have numerous, completely different careers, all under the umbrella of the same employer with continuity of service and benefits and pension and so forth.

[00:01:43] **Katie Jensen:**

Today, Alan shares the selfless work that goes into being a public servant -

[00:01:47] **Allan Scott:**

And that's the public service spirit.

[00:01:49] **Katie Jensen:**

Fun facts picked up along the way -

[00:01:52] **Allan Scott:**

And you learn interesting things, you

know, like there's more kilometers of snowmobile trails in Ontario than there are kilometers of Kings Highway.

[00:01:59] **Katie Jensen:**

And advice to anyone interested in a new line of work.

[00:02:03] **Allan Scott:**

I really encourage anyone considering a career in public service to go on YouTube and to look up scenes from the old BBC series, "Yes Minister."

[00:02:13] **Katie Jensen:**

We started by exploring Alan's early life, the time when he first got a sense of what he wanted to do as a career.

[00:02:19] **Allan Scott:**

I think like a lot of, uh, people who entered undergraduate studies, uh, I didn't really know what I wanted to do.

[00:02:24] **Allan Scott:** I did a business degree simply because it seemed the most, uh, practical. And in my last year of my business degree, I was drawn towards law enforcement, and it was a very tough and difficult recruitment process, took about a year. So I started it, and I got job offers from both the OPP and the, uh, Toronto Police and I took the job with the Toronto Police and I did that as a police constable for, I think, a little over three years.

[00:02:48] **Allan Scott:**

Then I left policing and I made the jump to the province. So I went from, I guess, a municipal public servant to a provincial one in 1991 when I joined the Ministry of the Attorney General as a provincial prosecutor.

[00:03:00] **Katie Jensen:**

When you say provincial prosecutor, some people might think D.A. 's office, but obviously for the province, you're not working for a D.A..

[00:03:06] **Allan Scott:**

No, so we work for the Attorney General, like crown attorneys, but usually provincial prosecutors are not lawyers. Uh, at the time, no certification or qualifications were required beyond a knowledge of the justice system. And what a provincial prosecutor does is they prosecute provincial statutes. Most commonly traffic court, but they also prosecute virtually every other provincial statute, the Blind Person Rights Act, the Education Act, relating to truancy, Trespass to Property Act, and so, I mean, there's thousands of provincial statutes.

[00:03:42] **Allan Scott:**

It can be a really interesting job with a very diverse portfolio of things you could be doing from day to day. And I did that for a while. I did that, I think, for about seven years.

[00:03:51] **Katie Jensen:** And then you moved on to the Solicitor General's office, right?

[00:03:53] **Allan Scott:**

Right. The reality is the Ministry of the Attorney General within the Ontario government is known as the Ministry of Lawyers.

[00:04:00] **Allan Scott:**

It's known that for a reason, because if you're not a lawyer, there is a real ceiling to a career within the ministry. So I am not a lawyer. But then an interesting

policy job became available in a secretariat at the time known as the Ontario Crime Control Commission. This was a little secretariat set up by the then Mike Harris government.

[00:04:20] **Allan Scott:**

It was mostly staffed on the political side, but they needed a public servant to come in and help them. So I started there as a policy analyst, and then I flipped from the secretariat to the ministry proper where I worked on a number of policing policy files in the policing standards section.

[00:04:40] **Allan Scott:**

These included regulations around suspect apprehension pursuits what most people would call police chases. And also in implementing the then new adequacy standards guidelines, which are the Provincial rules that require police services across the province to meet minimum standards in different areas, working with children's aid societies, staffing courthouses with a courthouse security and so on and so forth.

[00:05:08] **Allan Scott:**

So that was my first real policy job in government and I learned quite a bit there.

[00:05:13] **Katie Jensen:**

Can you tell me how you drew on what you saw in your short time as a constable and how that informed your work or your perspective as a policy analyst?

[00:05:21] **Allan Scott:**

Having frontline experience is really helpful when you're developing policies

because it adds value to the discussion, I think.

[00:05:27] **Allan Scott:**

Many of us are familiar with the idea of new rules and policies coming down from on high that don't make a lot of sense to frontline staff to people who are doing the work, right? We hear this in the health care professions. We hear it everywhere and it was certainly true in policing as well. So when you're discussing the nuances and wordings of different types of policies that might have to be operationalized I believe it was helpful for me to be able to bring some frontline experience as to what actually happens.

[00:06:00] **Allan Scott:**

I felt like my perspective was valued at the table because everybody wants to get the policies right. There's no point in writing a policy that is very difficult or impossible to implement on the ground.

[00:06:15] **Katie Jensen:**

Do you think that everyone who works in public service should start with some frontline experience regardless of the sector they're working in?

[00:06:21] **Allan Scott:**

I don't think I'd like to make that as a rule or blanket advice for everyone. I encourage anyone interested in public service to gather up as much experience in anything that they can, and to bring that to the table. Because as you climb the ladder, it isn't just about your technical skills anymore, or what letters you have after your name. It's about broadening the diversity of perspectives and experience at a table where ideas are being formulated.

[00:06:49] **Katie Jensen:** Tell me about the pivot that took you from Ontario Crime Control to the Ministry of Tourism, and what sparked your interest there.

[00:06:56] **Allan Scott:**

Well, one of the great things about being a public servant is you can have numerous, completely different careers, all under the umbrella of the same employer with continuity of service and benefits and pension and so forth.

[00:07:09] **Allan Scott:**

The job at the Ministry of Tourism was being a Manager of Policy and Strategy Development. So I went from a policy wonk to a policy manager. And honestly, it was my first manager gig in the Ontario Public Service. So anyone that's climbed that ladder knows it's really, really hard to kind of go from worker to, to manager.

[00:07:31] **Allan Scott:**

So when an opportunity presents itself, you have to really think hard before you turn it down to wait for a better one, because the one thing that they look for when they're hiring a manager is management experience. So if someone's offering you management experience, you take it wherever. And I really enjoyed it, because it was my first small ministry.

[00:07:52] **Allan Scott:**

And that meant that no matter how junior you were, you were often sitting at a table with the deputy, ADMs, the Minister, Chief of Staff. So there was a tremendous amount of vertical exposure within the organization because it was so small. It's an economic portfolio, right? You're dealing with one of the

largest sectors in the Ontario economy that's extraordinarily diverse, geographically, in terms of services offered. And you learn about the intersection between marketing dollars, and what drives the customer experience, and what people seek when they make a choice as to where they spend their travel dollars. And then you've got to formulate policies that can be implemented by industry that will help everyone, right?

[00:08:37] **Allan Scott:**

The end user, the tourists, the businesses, which employ massive numbers of people across the province. And you learn interesting things, you know, like there's more kilometers of snowmobile trails in Ontario than there are kilometers of King's Highways.

[00:08:52] **Katie Jensen:**

I'm curious if people found out that you had taken this job and then thought of you as the Ontario travel guy. At the time, were you the go-to guy that your friends and family went to ask, where should I go on holiday? What's the best park to go to?

[00:09:02] **Allan Scott:**

They didn't. And the reason is when people are formulating travel, of course, they tend to think wider than Ontario. And the challenge is what I learned was people are seeking authenticity and experience when they travel, and Ontario has a lot of those to offer, there's no question about it. But it was always a stiff competition for the consumer's dollar, right? So it was a challenge, but. To your question about family, anyone who pursues a public sector career is

going to struggle with explaining their job to family. And the conversations often go something like, “Oh, and what do you do?”

[00:09:39] **Allan Scott:** And you say something like, “Oh, I’m the Executive Assistant to the Associate Deputy Minister in charge of, Uh, performance metrics. They’re like, what? Oh, well, like right now I’m doing a comparative jurisdictional analysis on performance metrics and how the success of those metrics is measured so that this information can be used to create a new Schedule G to cabinet submission.”

[00:10:05] **Allan Scott:** And they have a blank stare. They didn’t understand anything you just said. And they’re pretty sure their tax dollars are being wasted. Right? Which, to be clear, they’re not. This is important work. But the people that get jazzed about it are public servants and no one else. So, once you’ve been doing this for about ten years and someone asks what you do, you just say, you work for the government.

[00:10:24] **Allan Scott:** And if they press you, you can just say, “Well, I can’t really talk too much about my work.” Right? It at least gives a bit of a cachet or an air to it, I guess.

[00:10:32] **Katie Jensen:** Allan explained why the role of the public servant is so vital to supporting our communities and the economy.

[00:10:37] **Allan Scott:** I can say that there is a great honor in being a public servant, but the emphasis is on the word servant.

[00:10:44] **Allan Scott:** If you think of Downton Abbey, right? The upstairs can’t function without the downstairs, and the public servant are the downstairs people. So anytime an Ontario resident goes out, say in the tourism field, they experience a great destination, they’re at Niagara Falls, they’re experiencing what that has to offer.

[00:11:01] **Allan Scott:** They experience the downstream effects of policies, procedures that are being continuously monitored, measured, re-evaluated, funded, defunded, change funding, augmented, adapted to new technology and emerging trends and labor market challenges. And all of the work that goes into that is complex, technical, and is done by people you’ve never heard of and you’ll never see and their names will never appear in press releases.

[00:11:35] **Allan Scott:** A saying within the Ontario Public Service is, if you want gratitude, get a dog. Because a servant doesn’t do it for gratitude or public recognition or anything like that. If you’re good at your job, you will command the quiet respect of your peers, and that will be immensely valuable to you.

[00:11:55] **Katie Jensen:** What kind of skills does the job require? You mentioned complex technical work, a lot of parsing the nuances of documents. It seems research heavy. What kind of broad skills does someone need to have to succeed?

[00:12:04] **Allan Scott:** They need to be inquisitive. They need to be the sort of

person that's very curious about why or how something works or why it doesn't work.

[00:12:13] **Allan Scott:**

They should be above average politically engaged in the sense of trying to understand how things work in terms of how laws are passed and so forth. So, often, public servants will start off being highly political engaged and then they'll get into the weeds and then they'll like the weeds and so forth.

[00:12:32] **Allan Scott:**

They tend to be high academic achievers in general. In the public service you have a lot of highly educated people with more letters after their name than in their name, but that's not always required. We are technically a non-credential based hirer. We don't set up a particular degree as a bar to the vast majority of positions that get advertised.

[00:12:58] **Allan Scott:**

That young person who's inquisitive, they don't necessarily seem to fit into other things naturally, maybe they don't have natural sales skills, I think we probably have more than our fair share of introverts, so really smart, clever, quieter, curious people who take pride in their relationships within other people, but they're not necessarily a limelight seekers. And I don't want to exclude extroverts or people who have really good sales skills or anything like that from considering public service in the Ontario public service. There's over 60,000 people. If there's a type of person in the world, they're in our workforce somewhere.

[00:13:41] **Allan Scott:**

There's opportunities for everyone, but I think I've described the traits where we have a disproportionate share of folks in our workforce.

[00:13:51] **Katie Jensen:**

I'm really interested in the fact that you mentioned political engagement, because it seems to me that it might particularly sting to have to be neutral when certain parties enter office?

[00:14:01] **Katie Jensen:** Do you think that that's something that people who enter public service might have a special challenge dealing with to care more about politics, but have to remain neutral?

[00:14:08] **Allan Scott:** It's a challenge often for many, but not all newer hires, right? There are sometimes people that get into public service and they're there because they feel very passionate about a particular policy, whatever it happens to be. They get into it and they get to work in that area and they're really jazzed and they're highly engaged and they love it. And then there's, the public service terminology is, an intervening event, an election. And the government changes and that policy that they loved was happened to be a flash point.

[00:14:38] **Allan Scott:**

Things change, and the new government comes in and they change or cancel that particular program or policy. And I have seen a case where a public servant who's been there maybe two, three, four, five years is like, "Well, that can't be like what's going on? No, this is the right thing to do. Why are they doing that?"

[00:14:56] **Allan Scott:**

And then worse, right? They're called on to be the ones in charge of implementing the new policy or or tearing down the old one. And this is an opportunity to mentor that public servant and to inculcate within them a mercenary spirit. The big P policy decisions get made by people who put their names on ballot papers, and that's not you.

[00:15:17] **Allan Scott:**

So you have to defer and put as much energy into implementing the new policy as you did the old one. And I was mentored in this by one of my favorite public servants, and what he told me was he was in charge of implementing an employment equity legislation under the Ray government back in the first half of the 90s and during the 1995 election. It was one of the flashpoint issues and I believe the soon to be Premier at that time, Mike Harris, called it a "quota law." Harris won that election as we know and one of his first desires was to get rid of what he called the 'quota law,' right?

[00:15:56] **Allan Scott:**

And my friend had worked really hard and it was a very complex set of nuanced policies and procedures and regulations that had a wide or that involved a wide array of statutes and secretariats and funding, and you couldn't just flick a switch and turn it off, right? Tearing down the program was just as complex as building it.

[00:16:16] **Allan Scott:**

My friend put his hand up and said, 'Oh, I can help you tear that program down. I built it.' And that's what he did. And he said, okay, you know, the first thing you

do is you extend all the deadlines by order and course for compliance. The next thing you do is you return all the seconded staff in charge of enforcing the new laws to their home units. The third thing you do is you enact new and repeal regulations. The fourth thing you do is you put through a bill to amend all the statutes that were amended to implement it, right? So this is the sort of complex work. And my friend takes equal satisfaction in building up the laws and the policies and the regulations as he did in tearing them down. And that's the public service spirit.

[00:16:56] **Allan Scott:** You're implementing the will of the people of Ontario. It's expressed through the government that they choose.

[00:17:03] **Katie Jensen:** It reminds me a lot of "killing your darlings" when you're writing. Like you can fall in love with a character and then if something's not working out, you can get really fixated and stuck on trying to preserve that. Even in the midst of it not working out, it can be so hard to do that when you've poured thousands of hours into something.

[00:17:17] **Allan Scott:**

I think it's a great example. The pride you take is in the work you did, not in the policy outcomes or the political or policy goals associated with the policy. I really encourage anyone considering a career in public service to, uh, to go on YouTube and to look up scenes from the old BBC series, "Yes Minister."

[00:17:41] **Allan Scott:**

It's a parody, it's a spoof, but it was written by people, secretly, who were in

government. And a lot of it hits so close to home, right? I mean, they always take it to the absurd for the sake of humor and entertainment, but if you back it off one or two notches, it's dead on. So there's the, the head character at one point, they were questioning him and they said, "How can you implement government policy if you believe it's wrong?" And he said, 'Uh, well, almost all government policy is wrong, but it's frightfully well executed."

[00:18:16] **Katie Jensen:**

Thank you for listening to part one of our conversation with Allan Scott. In part two, we dig deeper into his experience, returning to inspections, investigations, and enforcement work, reminiscent of his policing days.

[00:18:29] **Allan Scott:**

I got to lead a really amazing group of people who were in charge of specifically looking for people who were seeking to obtain student assistance from the government, who were not legally entitled to receive it.

[00:18:42] **Katie Jensen:** We learn about the ways applicants get creative with their income reporting.

[00:18:45] **Allan Scott:**

I'm not a tax lawyer. That may be, from CRA's perspective, a perfectly valid and legal thing to do, I don't know. But, for an OSAP purpose, you can't file a tax return saying you're in \$200,000 last year and sign a form claiming that you actually only earned \$7,000 a year.

[00:19:03] **Katie Jensen:**

And what Allan is doing to keep being of service to others, even in his retirement.

[00:19:08] **Katie Jensen:**

Has anyone ever called you kindergarten cop?

[00:19:10] **Allan Scott:**

I've gotten that a few times if they find out that I was a police officer at some point and I'm also six foot two, right? So I'm big so I kind of get it. And people do often in fact mistake me for Arnold Schwarzenegger, it's a very common error, I deal with it my whole life.

[00:19:27] **Katie Jensen:**

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[00:19:51] **Katie Jensen:**

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