

Queen's Park UPDATE



Strut Your Stuff

Dalton McGuinty shuffles Ontario Cabinet:

Today Dalton McGuinty has shuffled his Cabinet focusing on experience heading into the fall session at Queen's Park. This is almost certainly the last shuffle before the provincial election scheduled for October, 2011. Two recent by-election winners have been added to Cabinet from the backbench. No Minister has been dropped from Cabinet altogether, although there are several demotions. Two portfolios have been split to accommodate the two new appointments. The Cabinet shuffle comes after a tough summer for the McGuinty government and the Premier in particular, with controversial issues such as the HST, Eco-fees, Micro-fit solar rates, increasing hydro and car insurance rates, LHINs and issues revolving around the TTC/Metrolinx Presto payment cards. The shuffle gives new Cabinet ministers the remainder of the summer to get up-to-speed on their Ministries before the Legislature reconvenes on September 13. Dalton McGuinty has kept his economic team intact following this shuffle.

The changes are:

The usually reliable and steady Environment Minister John Gerrestsen has been demoted to the Consumer Services Ministry. It is believed that the eco-fees fiasco and his poor job selling implementation of these fees that started July 1 led to this move. Backlash from the public led to the McGuinty government backing down on the eco-fees recycling program until the fall. John will now be tasked with steering the legalization of MMA fighting in Ontario.

Jim Wilkinson who was McGuinty's point person on selling the HST earlier this summer as Minister of Revenue will now move over to the Environment to handle the Eco-fees file. This is considered a promotion due to his work on selling the HST.

After successfully handling the announcement to legalize MMA fights in Ontario, Consumer Services Minister Sophia Aggelonitis is rewarded with a promotion to Minister of Revenue. Aggelonitis was first appointed to Cabinet in the last shuffle and has already earned a major promotion. Aggelonitis is also now also responsible for the Seniors portfolio.

Jim Bradley becomes Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services swapping jobs with Rick Bartolucci who now takes on the Municipal Affairs and Housing file.



The Energy and Infrastructure portfolios have been split. Brad Duguid loses control of the Infrastructure portfolio but retains the Energy portfolio. The move is being sold as an opportunity for Mr. Duguid to concentrate on the Energy file where many controversies persist. Ontario residents are expected to see an increase on their hydro bills in the weeks to come.

Former Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli will now be responsible for Infrastructure. Also former Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray enters Cabinet as Minister of Research and Innovation. Chiarelli and Murray bring a wealth of experience to the Ontario Cabinet, but given that both were recently elected in by-elections, their promotions could create a backlash for McGuinty from several long serving and long-suffering backbench MPPs who have been patiently waiting for an opportunity to serve in Cabinet. Another recent by-election winner Dr. Eric Hoskins was promoted to Cabinet in the previous shuffle. Potentially these moves could make it more difficult to secure support from the Liberal backbenches for future controversial initiatives.

John Milloy retains the Training, Colleges and Universities Ministry, but gives up Research and Innovation.

Major portfolios including Finance, Economic Development, Transportation, Education, Health and Long Term Care and the Attorney General remain unchanged.

A couple of minor changes to note. Responsibility for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission now falls under the Attorney General's responsibility. Also the Ministry of Health Promotion is now the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport.

Strong performing MPPs including former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care David Caplan, Aileen Carroll, Helena Jaczek, Kevin Flynn, Greg Sorbara, David Zimmer and others remain outside the Cabinet. Another recent by-election winner Dr. Eric Hoskins was promoted to cabinet in the previous shuffle. Potentially these moves could make it more difficult to secure support from his backbench MPPs on future controversial legislation.

We presume the Premiere will shuffle the roster of Parliamentary Assistants in a few days to reflect the Cabinet shuffle.

There is no indication that the NDP or the PC opposition will shuffle critic roles as a result of this Cabinet shuffle today.

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