



McGuinty Cabinet Shuffle: Who Was Left Behind

January 18, 2010

There is probably no more difficult task for any Prime Minister or Premier than to build one's Cabinet. It would be nice if competency were the only criteria. But instead there are multiple and sometimes conflicting criteria at play: seniority, ethnicity, sex, regional representation, intention to run in the next election, record of loyalty and past service to the Premier and Party, health, leadership aspirations, ideological orientation, perceived ability to be a "team player" and so on.

With that as context, some of the changes in Premier McGuinty's latest Cabinet shuffle are perhaps more understandable. Nevertheless, one can't help but sympathize with those who seem unable to crack the Cabinet glass ceiling and wonder why. For example

Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Scarborough East) who was apparently good enough to be Mayor of Pickering from 1998 to 2003 and be chair of or serve on multiple boards of directors, but isn't good enough to hold even the smallest Ontario government ministerial portfolio.

Dr. Helena Jaczek (Oak Ridges-Markham) who served very competently as Chief Medical Officer of one of Ontario's largest municipalities (York Region), but isn't even mentioned as a possible Minister of Health and Long-Term Care or Minister of Health Promotion and seems to have fallen in the pecking order behind newly minted MPP Dr. Eric Hoskins.

David Zimmer (Willowdale) who was Chair of the Toronto Housing Corporation and Vice Chair of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board and since becoming an MPP has toiled in the trenches of government as Parliamentary Assistant to the Attorney General, where among other things he led the regulation of paralegals. Nevertheless, Zimmer has fallen short of the big job.

Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent-Essex) who has served 15 years in the Legislature and would seem a natural for Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Leaving MPPs of this caliber on the back benches is particularly surprising given the elevation of Dr. Eric Hoskins to Cabinet. Hoskins was elected for the first time last Fall, wasn't appointed as Parliamentary Assistant to a Minister (the usual training ground for Ministers), nor as chair of a Legislative committee, didn't pilot a single piece of legislation and has very limited parliamentary experience. What does Dr. Hoskins have (or is perceived to have) that Dr. Jaczek, David Zimmer and many other long-suffering Liberal backbenchers don't have?