



George Smitherman resigns from the Ontario cabinet to run for Mayor of Toronto

Yesterday, Sunday November 9, Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Infrastructure George Smitherman told Premier Dalton McGuinty that he intends to run for Mayor of Toronto and resigned from Cabinet, effective immediately. Smitherman, nicknamed 'Furious George', is no stranger to Toronto municipal politics, having been Campaign Manager and Chief of Staff to former Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall.

Smitherman first seriously hinted he was running for Mayor during the Toronto garbage strike last summer. Since then he has been trying to play down speculation in the media, while trying to scare off other candidates and balance his Mayor ambitions with his responsibilities as Ontario's most powerful Cabinet Minister.

Smitherman will resign as the MPP for Rosedale Centre by March 1. Minister without Portfolio and Cabinet Chair Gerry Phillips will become Minister of Energy and Infrastructure until the end of the Legislature rises for the Christmas recess. He served previously as Energy Minister between 2007-2008. A Cabinet shuffle is expected by January that will name a new Deputy Premier and likely a new Minister (or Ministers) of Energy and Infrastructure. This Cabinet shuffle is expected to be fairly wide reaching and will establish the Cabinet team that Premier McGuinty will take with him into the election in October 2011.

It is too early to predict who might be added to Cabinet or what Ministries might see changes. Sophia Aggelonitis, Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon, Helena Jaczek, Phil McNeely, Maria VanBommel, Charles Souza, Wayne Arthurs, David Zimmer and recently-elected Eric Hoskins are all possibilities for a promotion. Current members of Cabinet such as John Wilkinson, Monique Smith, Sandra Pupatello, Madeleine Meilleur, John Gerrestsen, Donna Cansfield, Jim Bradley, Laurel Broten and Chris Bentley may be given increased responsibilities. There are also more questions today what happens should Dalton McGuinty step down in the future. Smitherman and Bryant were once considered potential future leadership candidates for the Ontario Liberals and their departures have left a vacuum..

The news regarding George Smitherman has major implications both at Queen's Park and Toronto City Hall.

At Queen's Park, Dalton McGuinty loses another Senior Cabinet Minister. David Caplan was forced to resign this fall over the eHealth scandal. Michael Bryant also resigned from Cabinet this year in order to take a job with Invest Toronto. Minister of Municipal Affairs Jim Watson is rumoured to be running for Mayor of Ottawa (he previously served as Mayor from 1997-2000) and could be leaving Cabinet shortly. The news also comes as major Bills are going through the Legislature including the *Green Energy Act*, *Bill 179 (Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act)*, *the Good Government Act*, *the Municipal Amendment Act* and other important pieces of legislation now under the

sponsorship of Ministers who are new, serving on an interim basis or whose future in the Cabinet is uncertain. Perhaps most important, however, is that Dalton McGuinty loses his government's attack dog. Smitherman was always prepared to do the partisan dirty work that allowed the Premier to take the statesman's high road. The resignation, therefore, could introduce a significant change in the McGuinty government's style.

Several infrastructure projects in the review process by the Infrastructure Ministry could also be impacted by the resignation.

Smitherman's departure takes place as the Ontario Liberals attempt to tackle a record \$24.7 billion dollar budget deficit. The resignation must have come as a surprise to Ontario Liberals since Smitherman was appointed on Saturday to a nine person spending control panel designed to provide advice to Finance Minister Duncan on potential spending cuts to address the budget shortfall. Also appointed to this panel were Chris Bentley, Madeleine Meilleur, Kathleen Wynne, Monique Smith, Gerry Phillips, Greg Sorbara, Sophia Aggelonitis and Maria VonBommel¹. It is unlikely that Smitherman will remain on this panel.

Some pundits predicted Smitherman would not run for Mayor based on a recent Angus Reid poll that had potential mayoralty opponent John Tory showing a big early lead (47% to 21% of respondents). Others felt a race for Mayor was doomed because of Smitherman's role in the eHealth scandal. Some have speculated that he opted to run for Mayor regardless because he has gone as far as he can in the Ontario government. There is evidence that Smitherman had fallen out of favour with some other Cabinet ministers over continuing problems at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, the eHealth debacle, the selection of contentious power generation sites by the Ontario Power Authority that reported to him and his "style". He was recently gang tackled by his Cabinet colleagues over concessions he was prepared to give in a green energy deal involving Korean firm Samsung. Cabinet's rejection of the Samsung proposal --- and the obviously intentional leaking of that rejection ----- suggest that Smitherman's power in Cabinet had peaked.

At Toronto City Hall, this announcement has huge implications and has created a buzz. Current Mayor David Miller announced that he is not seeking re-election in November 2010. That changed the dynamics of the Mayor race where previously the thought was the opposition to Miller had to unite under one candidate. A wide open, multicandidate race is now likely. John Tory (Former PC leader, Rogers CEO and CFRB radio host) has not yet declared, but the recent Angus Reid poll has probably provided considerable encouragement. Former Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray, TTC chair Adam Giambrone, Toronto Council's budget chief Shelley Carroll, Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti (York West), Michael Thompson (Scarborough Centre) or Denzil Minnan-Wong (Don Valley East) could also be candidates. Karen Stintz was once a rumoured candidate but she has since announced her intention not to run. NDP MP and former Toronto Councillor Olivia Chow has also been mentioned as a possibility, but the NDP is highly unlikely to risk losing that riding federally.

D.R. Wolk – 9/11/2009

¹ <http://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/article/722564--nine-mpps-to-monitor-ontario-s-spending>

Following is the statement from Dalton McGuinty on George Smitherman's resignation from Cabinet:

"Today my colleague George Smitherman informed me he would be resigning his posts as Deputy Premier and Minister for Energy and Infrastructure in order to run for the Mayoralty of Toronto. He will be staying on as the MPP for Toronto Centre for a short time while he finishes several projects in his community.

I want to thank George for his tireless efforts on behalf of Ontarians, his constituents and our government. Since he was first elected to the Provincial Legislature in 1999, George has helped make Ontario a better and stronger place.

As Health Minister, he helped reduce wait times and hire more doctors and nurses. Hospitals, emergency rooms and long-term care around the province saw tremendous progress under his leadership. The Fraser Institute recently reported that Ontario now has the shortest wait times for surgery in Canada.

As Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, George spearheaded Ontario's Green Energy Act, which will help to create 50,000 Ontario jobs while fighting the effects of climate change. And he has worked tirelessly to turn our economic stimulus plan into construction jobs for Ontario workers in every part of our province.

And as an MPP, George has consistently stood up for the underdog, championed the rights and the needs of his constituents and used his considerable gifts and talents serving the people of his community.

That's the key to George. For him, public service is never about him — it's always been about the people he serves. It's all about their health care, their energy, their jobs and their futures.

I'm proud to have served with George, and prouder still to call him my good friend.

I wish George and Christopher all the best as they start this latest chapter in their lives, together — and thank each of them for all they've done to make Ontario the greatest province in the best country in the world."



Following is the statement from George Smitherman on his decision to resign from Cabinet:

"Yesterday I advised Premier McGuinty of my decision to resign from his Cabinet.

This was an important step for me as I begin to make the transition to being a candidate for mayor of Toronto. While I will no longer serve in the Cabinet, I will continue to serve as the MPP for Toronto Centre in the Ontario legislature for the time being.

I have appreciated the opportunity to work with a premier, and with a government, that has delivered real and positive change for the people of Ontario. It has been an honour to work alongside Premier Dalton McGuinty, a leader who continues to lead the province with distinction.

I am also proud of my own role in delivering on significant parts of the government's agenda and leaving a lasting legacy. It is now time for me to turn my attention elsewhere. I've made no secret of the fact that I have been considering entering the race for Mayor of Toronto.

I am a son of this city. It is where I was born, where I was raised. It's a city that has been a source of great pride and a place where I've devoted a great deal of my energy trying to help build a stronger community. Toronto has had an amazing history, of which we should all be proud. I believe it can have an even brighter future.

However, one decade into the 21st century, this city is facing tremendous challenges, challenges that threaten to limit our great potential. Toronto is in desperate need of strong leadership if it is to address these challenges and build an even stronger city.

I believe that I can deliver the leadership that Toronto needs. I have the experience, the energy, the passion and record of accomplishment to lead this city in a new direction with confidence.

I've never been one to simply tinker with the edges when what's required is bold action. During my time in the McGuinty Cabinet, I have tackled some of the government's most challenging files and have demonstrated the ability to lead major transformation. As Ontario's health minister, I led major change initiatives that resulted in lower wait times, more nurses, improved community health care, and provided more Ontarians with access to a family doctor.

While I am proud of these accomplishments, I am even more proud of the changes I made to introduce accountability and sustainability into healthcare, particularly in addressing the significant cost pressures faced by hospitals.



Similarly, as energy and infrastructure minister, I led some of the government's most critical environmental and economic initiatives. The Green Energy Act, which is the first of its kind in North America, holds the promise for real environmental and economic transformation that will make our air cleaner, contribute to the solutions to climate change, and create new jobs and economic growth for Ontarians.

Recently, I was privileged to celebrate 30 years of political activism surrounded by friends, family and political supporters. It reminded me of how many people have been there to have helped me in life's journey and I am truly touched by the support that they have offered me over the years.

This is particularly true of those closest to me, particularly my family and my husband, Christopher. It has been an honour to have been able to work on behalf of the people Ontario. Today, however, I am looking to turn my focus exclusively on the needs of the City of Toronto as I prepare to enter the race for mayor. I hope to soon have the honour of serving the people of Toronto in that capacity, as their mayor.

In closing, I want to thank my friend and leader, Premier Dalton McGuinty for the opportunity to have been part of his government. I also want to thank the people of Toronto Centre who, in three successive elections, have shown their confidence in me to serve as their representative in the Ontario legislature."