



McGuinty names smaller cabinet to focus on jobs and the economy

In response to the message from the Ontario electorate on October 6th, Premier Dalton McGuinty has introduced a leaner provincial cabinet that will focus on the economy and job creation. In a groundbreaking first, Dalton McGuinty announced his cabinet online via Twitter before it had been sworn in.

The unspoken political reality is that minority governments are not about bold new visions but are about the “art of the possible.” Their focus is on one major question: how do we stay in power? While the Premier has reduced the size of his cabinet by more than 20 per cent, his appointments show that he will be relying on experienced Cabinet Ministers to guide this minority government.

Rather than a major structural overhaul of ministries, the Premier has made "tweaks" to the Cabinet structure. It is important to recall that the Drummond Commission, which is charged with a wholesale review of government, could still mandate structural changes after the budget (which is expected in the spring).

Although the Premier refers to his government as a “major minority”, the reality is that Ontario has its first minority legislature in almost 25 years. A subtle, yet key, appointment for Dalton McGuinty is that of Kitchener Centre MPP John Milloy as Liberal House Leader and Minister of Community and Social Services.

John Milloy avoided controversy while also surviving a close election against a very high profile Tory in Kitchener Centre. He is being rewarded for his steady service. His experience, strategic wisdom and counsel will be critical to prolonging a minority government for Dalton McGuinty. John Milloy also served as Prime Minister Chretien’s legislative assistant, experience that will be helpful to the Premier.

The Premier has signaled that he is ready and eager to return to work. Within days of the October 6th election and well before naming his cabinet, Dalton McGuinty announced that trusted minister Dwight Duncan would be staying at finance. Dwight Duncan has also been named Deputy Premier.

Immediately following the election, Minister Duncan was invited back to work to begin preparing a fall economic statement, sending a signal that Ontario is back at work and open for business. Expect Minister Duncan’s economic statement and spring budget to focus heavily on job creation and economic relief.

**For more information on any of these issues or events, please contact
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Health: Deb Matthews

There was much media speculation that the Premier would announce a new health minister, but Dalton McGuinty seems to be staying the course with the health portfolio by keeping Deb Matthews on the file. While she is held in high regard, insiders wonder if Matthews is prepared to tackle the big fights that are required to bring health spending down to the level of 3 per cent increases. The Ontario Medical Association will start to negotiate its Physicians Services Agreement in just a few months and it will be important to see how she handles this first “test”.

Energy: Chris Bentley

The energy portfolio has been a revolving door of late, so it is no surprise that the Premier appointed a new minister. However, it is surprising that Chris Bentley is leaving the Attorney General’s office to head this file. This is a sign of change in the way that energy will work in Ontario. With administrative and logistical challenges plaguing the green energy act from its inception, these significant “growing pains” to the cornerstone of the government’s agenda were clearly noted by the Premier with his new cabinet assignments.

Chris Bentley is regarded as extremely solid, steady and will be measured in terms of his ability to relocate or move the Mississauga power plant. Expect a clean slate for the Green Energy Act as well as the implementation of the long term electricity plan as Minister Bentley returns to the energy portfolio.

Agriculture: Ted McMeekin

Popular MPP Ted McMeekin returns to cabinet in somewhat of a surprise as agriculture minister. As Dalton McGuinty’s only quasi-rural member with significant cabinet experience, McMeekin inherits an extremely underrated, yet important, Ontario portfolio.

Ted McMeekin and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath are also close, having both served together on Hamilton City Council. Dalton McGuinty could be leaning on his new agriculture minister to prolong his minority government with NDP support.

Municipal Affairs and Aboriginal Affairs: Kathleen Wynne

Expect “Tory slayer” Kathleen Wynne to be respected by her negotiating opponents, while noting that she is not expected to back down from the government’s best interests around uploading. Her negotiations with the Ford brothers in Toronto could prove epic, especially around the waterfront and TTC expansion. Kathleen Wynne’s appointment can be seen as evidence that the government is looking to take on tough battles.

Attorney General: John Gerretsen

John Gerretsen has always claimed to not want the Attorney General portfolio, but what lawyer doesn’t want Ontario’s top post?

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What this means to you

All MPPs are now paramount to the success and longevity of this legislature and must be treated as such. Every vote matters in a minority situation and backbench caucus members from all parties must now be heard on every issue and every vote.

Working collaboratively with bureaucrats to further agendas will be key to client success. Hill & Knowlton is strategically situated on all sides of the aisle in the Ontario legislature and throughout the senior public service.

Remember, consensus is the key during a minority government. Hill & Knowlton can help you bridge the consensus you need to identify success frame wins on all sides during the most potentially turbulent political times we have encountered in a quarter century.

For more information about how H&K can help your organization, please contact Judy Pfeifer, Vice President, Public Affairs at judy.pfeifer@hillandknowlton.ca or by phone at (416) 413-4619.

Ontario Cabinet

Dalton McGuinty:	Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Jim Bradley:	Minister of the Environment
Rick Bartolucci:	Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of Cabinet
Dwight Duncan:	Minister of Finance, Deputy Premier
John Gerretsen:	Attorney General
Chris Bentley:	Minister of Energy
Madeleine Meilleur:	Minister of Community Safety & Correctional Services, Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs
Harinder Takhar:	Minister of Government Services
Kathleen Wynne:	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Michael Chan:	Minister of Tourism and Culture
Michael Gravelle:	Minister of Natural Resources
Brad Duguid:	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation
Deb Matthews:	Minister of Health and Long Term Care
John Milloy:	Minister of Community and Social Services, Government House Leader
Margarett Best:	Minister of Consumer Services

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Laurel Broten: Minister of Education,
Minister of Women's Issues

Linda Jeffrey: Minister of Labour,
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Eric Hoskins: Minister of Children and Youth Services

Glen Murray: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities

Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Transportation,
Minister of Infrastructure

Charles Sousa: Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Ted McMeekin: Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

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