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NEW CABINET SWORN IN

Ontario's new cabinet was sworn in by the Lieutenant Governor outdoors in front of the Main Legislative Building on the morning of Friday, June 24th. Hand picked by Premier Ford, surprisingly there was very little change from his cabinet prior to the dissolution of the last Parliament. Here are some of its features:

- The last cabinet had 28 members, the new one has 30
- The new cabinet has seven women while the previous one had nine
- Five brand new, first time MPPs were appointed to the new cabinet
- There are seven people of colour in the new cabinet
- Former ministers Lisa McLeod and Ross Romano were not reappointed. It's been reported that the feisty and combative McLeod is taking a break to restore her mental and physical health and Romano may simply have underperformed Ford's expectations
- The much-anticipated questions were: 1) Who would succeed Christine Elliott as Minister of Health; 2) Would Stephen Lecce be re-appointed as Minister of Education; and 3) Who will the Minister of Labour be??? Answers below.
- **Monte McNaughton, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex**
Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (Immigration was added to McNaughton's responsibilities probably to give him the responsibility for pressing for the immigration of more skilled trades workers into Ontario)
- **Kinga Surma, Etobicoke Centre**
Minister of Infrastructure, with an additional mandate for government real estate.
- **Prabmeet Sarkaria, Brampton South**
President of the Treasury Board, with an expanded mandate for emergency management and procurement, including Supply Ontario.
- **Vic Fideli, Nipissing**
Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, with an additional mandate for small business.
- **Lisa Thompson, Huron-Bruce**
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- **Greg Rickford, Kenora-Rainy River**
Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Indigenous Affairs (Rickford was previously Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry but his portfolio was disaggregated to allow the creation of two new portfolios with new ministers)

As already stated, there were very few changes in Ford's cabinet picks. Here's a list of the ministers who stayed put in their old portfolios:

- **Doug Ford, Etobicoke**
Premier of Ontario and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
- **Peter Bethlenfalvy, Pickering-Uxbridge**
Minister of Finance
- **Todd Smith, Bay of Quinte**
Minister of Energy

- **David Piccini, Northumberland-Peterborough South**
Minister of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks
- **Caroline Mulroney, York-Simcoe**
Minister of Transportation, Minister of Francophone Affairs
- **Stephen Lecce, King-Vaughan**
Minister of Education
- **Merrilee Fullerton, Kanata Carleton**
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
- **Jill Dunlop, Simcoe North**
Minister of Colleges and Universities
- **Doug Downey, Barrie-Springwater-Oro Medonte**
Attorney General
- **Steve Clark, Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes**
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- **Raymond Cho, Scarborough North**
Minister for Seniors and Accessibility
- **Paul Calandra, Markham-Stouffville**
Minister of Long-Term Care, Minister of Legislative Affairs and Government House Leader
- **Stan Cho, Willowdale**
Associate Minister of Transportation
- **Michael Tibollo, Vaughan-Woodbridge**
Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

Here's a list of ministers from the previous cabinet who got new assignments in the new one:

- **Sylvia Jones, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey**
Was the high performing Solicitor General in the previous cabinet and as widely rumoured, was promoted to Minister of Health and Deputy Premier, portfolios left vacant with the

retirement of Christine Elliott.

- **Kaleed Rasheed, Mississauga East-Cooksville**
was Associate Minister of Digital Government, a portfolio that doesn't exist at least in name in the new cabinet, and was appointed Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.
- **Parm Gill, Milton**
Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism in the previous cabinet was appointed Minister of Red Tape Reduction

Here's an introduction to the cabinet's newbies:

- **Michael Kerzner, York-Centre**
Solicitor General
Prior to his election, Kerzner was a business professional in the biosciences sector who performed volunteer services for synagogues
- **Neil Lumsden, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek**
Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Lumsden played ten highly accomplished seasons in the Canadian Football League who prior to his election headed up a sports marketing firm
- **George Pirie, Timmins**
Minister of Mines, with a mandate to develop the Ring of Fire (part of Greg Rickford's former portfolio)
Pirie spent 35 years in the mining industry at the most senior levels and immediately prior to his election was the Mayor of Timmins. He defeated long-serving NDP MPP Gilles Bisson
- **Graydon Smith, Parry Sound-Muskoka**
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry (also part of Greg Rickford's former portfolio)
Smith was a small business owner and operator who was involved in local politics for many years including as Mayor of Bracebridge from 2010 – 2022 and Deputy Chair of Muskoka District from 2017 - 2022

- **Charmaine Williams, Brampton Centre**
Associate Minister of Women’s Social and Economic Activity
Prior to her election to the Ontario legislature, Williams was a member of Brampton City Council and certified as a multi-systemic therapist, behavioural consultant and counsellor with her professional experience focused on youth
 - **Michael Ford, York South-Weston**
Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism
Michael Ford is the son of Premier Ford’s sister Kathy Ford and Ennio Stirpe. He was elected to the Toronto District School Board in 2014. In 2016 he was elected to Toronto City Council in a by-election caused by the death of his uncle, Rob Ford. He was re-elected in 2018 and in 2022 successfully sought election to the Ontario legislature.
 - **Michael Parsa, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill**
Associate Minister of Housing
Parsa was first elected in 2018 and served as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade and Parliamentary Assistant to the President of Treasury Board. Prior to his election in 2018 Parsa operated his family-owned business.
- Critics of premier Ford and his government have called the 28-year-old Michael Ford’s appointment the most blatant and outrageous act of nepotism Ontario has ever seen. The younger Ford’s victory in York South Weston is a major “get” for the Tories and he is believed by many to have served competently on Toronto City Council.

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE WSIB, FUTURE BENEFITS AND EMPLOYER PREMIUMS

All workers who become injured or sick because of workplaces causes must be treated fairly if not generously. They should receive the best quality medical care available in a timely way and should be provided with programs to assist in their recovery and help them return to work as soon as they are able. Furthermore, the families of workers who die because of workplace causes should be appropriately compensated.

Ontario’s worker compensation system is a no-fault group insurance plan. It provides loss of earnings or income replacement benefits to workers who become injured or sick because of workplace causes, pensions for those not able to return to work and death benefits in the event of workplace fatalities.

The creation of the system was part of a bargain made between the province’s workers and employers. Employers agreed to provide compensation to workers in the event of injuries, illnesses and deaths due to workplace causes and workers agreed to give up their right to sue employers.

Benefits paid by the WSIB are determined by the government. The policies around how these benefits are paid and how premiums are assessed to employers are determined by the WSIB. The system is funded by employer premiums and is not subsidized in any way by the provincial government.

In respect of premium rates paid by employers to fund the system, they are established annually by the WSIB and very basically are made up of two components: 1) the estimated full cost of new injuries (the risk); and 2) estimated administrative costs.

The WSIB’s current rate setting policy is a prudent one. It requires that the full costs of claims that occur in any given year must be fully paid for through employers’ premiums in that year. This policy has a number of

important advantages:

- It ensures that the costs of today's injuries are paid for by today's employers who are responsible for them and that those costs are not transferred onto the backs of the employers of tomorrow. (Before this policy was instituted by the WSIB, the cost of new injuries was improperly underpriced. Underpricing the risk produced operational losses year after year. Because of these successive annual deficits, the unfunded liability grew to about \$114 billion. The WSIB's unfunded liability, that was eliminated back in 2018, was caused to a significant degree by the improper underpricing of the cost of new injuries. The WSIB's current policy guards against annual operational losses and against the intergeneration transfer of claims costs.
- The policy also limits the government's ability to interfere in the WSIB's rate setting for their own political purposes. Government meddling is restricted to making amendments to certain provisions in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and by putting pressure on the WSIB's senior leadership.

Leading up to the recent Ontario general election, the Minister of Labour Training & Skills Development announced that if elected, the PC government will increase benefits paid to injured workers from 85% of net pre-injury earnings to 90%. Some have said because of the timing of this announcement, that it was a barefaced unashamed initiative to buy political favour from the labour community. Others have suggested that it was likely part of a deal made between the government and labour community to dampen labour's criticism of the WSIB's distribution of surplus-to-need funds to employers. Both might be true but whatever the reason, that is not my concern here. Treating injured workers fairly is my concern. So there is a more important higher level question that should be discussed.

The key questions with respect of the proposed increase are these:

- What is the right level of benefits?
- Why a percentage of the injured workers pre-injury net-after-tax earnings?
- Why 85% of net pre-injury earnings? Why not 80% or 90% or even 100%?"

These questions must be the major focus of any discussion about the benefit level before any change is made. What is the appropriate benefit level to treat workers fairly?

A percentage of an injured workers' net after tax income is used to determine the benefit level because benefits are not taxable in the hands of an injured worker and because an injured worker will not incur the normal costs associated with attending at the workplace.

Benefits are expected to keep an injured worker financially "whole" while on benefits with approximately the same amount of pre-injury after-tax income, no more and no less.

Because this proposed increase in benefits will require the government to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and because the actuaries at the WSIB are already busily calculating premium rates for 2023, we do not anticipate that the change will take place next year. However, we suspect our recently elected government's budget, expected to be introduced and passed in a special session this summer, could contain provisions that enable the increase.

While this does not relate to the key question about the appropriate benefit level to treat workers fairly and to keep them financially whole, employers should understand that the proposed increase from 85% to 90% amounts to a 5.88% increase in benefits. All other things being equal, this would lead to a 5.88% increase in the average premium rate. However, some of the increase could be offset with reductions

in the administrative costs component of the rate and by decreasing injury durations and getting workers back to work more quickly thereby reducing the cost of new injuries component of the rate. But the focus should remain clearly on the overarching question of the right benefit level to treat workers fairly.

Both the WSIB and the government have fully endorsed the not so new anymore Rate Framework with its employer centric rate setting and prospective experience rating program. The transition to the Rate Framework was delayed because of the pandemic. We fully expect the transition to the Rate Framework will proceed in 2023 with some employers whose experience is relatively better than their peers earning relative rate reductions and those with poorer performance relative to their peers receiving relative increases.

Back in about 2009, then Chair Seve Mahoney established sectoral Chair's Advisory Committees and an actuarial advisory committee to engage stakeholders and seek advice and feedback on proposed initiatives. This stakeholder engagement platform served to calm what had previously been highly adversarial and combative relationships with stakeholders.

Of all government ministries and agencies, this approach to stakeholder engagement with scheduled quarterly meetings was by far the best. If the government decides to move forward with the increase in the benefit level announced prior to the election by the minister, let's hope they use the CACs for positive discussions and that the most appropriate benefit level can be determined.

WSIB DOUBLES FINANCIAL REWARDS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Ontario's small businesses are responsible for a disproportionate share of workplace injuries and WSIB claims. This is probably because operating a small business is an "all-hands-on-deck" proposition where all employees are needed to show up and perform their assigned duties every day. Most small businesses just can't afford to have employees away from the workplace at off-site health and safety meetings and training courses.

Studies have shown that companies that effectively deploy health and safety management systems have significantly fewer workplace injuries and illnesses. A recent study by UBC professor Chris McLeod revealed that construction companies in Ontario that deploy the Certificate of Recognition (CoR) health and safety management system are 28% safer than similar companies in the province that do not.

The WSIB's Health and Safety Management Excellence Program is a great way for Ontario construction companies to implement a health and safety management system while earning significant financial rewards along the way to help offset the

associated costs. By signing up for the WSIB's HSEP, your association's contractor members can start their journey towards CoR certification (or most other recognized health and safety management systems) and receive rebates for the successful completion of the health and safety topics they choose to work on. The WSIB has already issued more than \$10 million in rebates to participating employers. Contractors can sign up anytime; there is continuous registration. And it doesn't matter if the contractor is a health and safety novice, intermediate or high performer.

To encourage small businesses to register for the HSEP and improve the health and safety performance of the small business sector, the WSIB recently announced that financial incentives for companies with 99 or fewer fulltime employees have been **DOUBLED!!!**

Please encourage your member contractors to consider registering for the WSIB's HSEP. To learn more click on the following link:

<https://www.wsib.ca/en/health-and-safety-excellence-program-earn-rebates-and-recognition>

TWISTS AND TURNS OF THE CAREERS OF PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS

Ever think you might like to throw your hat in the ring, put yourself out there and run for elected office. Here are some thumbnail sketches of the twists and turns that a political career can take:

- Vaughan mayor, Maurizio Bevilacqua (a former MP) has announced that he will not be seeking re-election this fall and it's rumoured that former MPP, former cabinet minister in the Liberal government of Kathleen Wynne and outgoing leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, Steven Del Duca, is considering a run for the position. Del Duca is a law school graduate who never practised law but instead worked as a Queen's Park political staffer and as policy advisor at the highly engaged and then Liberal leaning Carpenters Union before seeking elected office. The 48 year old Del Duca was first elected in a by-election in 2012, was re-elected in 2014 but defeated in 2018 and again in 2022.
- Hamilton's three term mayor, Fred Eisenberger has also announced that he will not be seeking re-election in the fall and it's widely reported that the outgoing Ontario NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, is pondering a run at the big chair at City Hall in The Hammer. Horwath is no newcomer to local politics. She was a three term Hamilton City councillor, before she entered the provincial arena in 2004.
- Former Ontario MPP and cabinet minister in the Liberal governments of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, Glenn Murray, has announced that he will run for mayor of Winnipeg. Murray was elected to the Ontario legislature three times, 2010, 2011 and 2014. Prior to moving to Toronto and entering provincial politics, Murray served as the high-profile mayor of Winnipeg from 1998 to 2004.
- Before becoming an elected politician, Bob Chiarelli served for seven years on the national Capital Commission. He was first elected to the Ontario legislature in 1987 and was re-elected in 1990 and 1995. He resigned his seat in the Ontario legislature in 1997 and was elected as Chair of the Region of Ottawa-Carleton. When the Region was disbanded and its municipalities amalgamated into a single tier local government, Chiarelli was elected mayor of new City of Ottawa in 2000 and re-elected in 2003. Defeated in the 2006 mayoralty election in the nation's capital, Chiarelli kept his powder dry until 2010 when he was elected again to the Ontario legislature in a by-election. He was re-elected in 2011 and 2014 but defeated in the Tory sweep in 2018. The 80 year old Chiarelli just can't quit, politics is in his DNA and he recently announced that he will be running to become mayor of Ottawa again.

ALGONQUIN INTRODUCES NEW TRADES MANAGEMENT DEGREE

Algonquin College recently launched a Part-time online Bachelor Degree. [The Bachelor of Business Administration – Trades Management](#) will start this coming Fall term and applications are being accepted for consideration. The program may be of interest to your contractor members for the professional development and advancement of their staffs.

Algonquin is looking for ways to increase

collaboration with associations for this and other programs that are relevant to the construction industry. This might include advertising, partnership/collaboration, or communication opportunities that your association might make available to reach your members.

Direct enquiries to Henry Garcia at garciah@algonquincollege.com or (613) 727-4723 x2471

ONTARIO NDP SELECTS TABUNS AS INTERIM LEADER

On June 28th members of the Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) Provincial Council selected the MPP for Toronto Danforth, Peter Tabuns, as Interim Leader, following the resignation of Andrea Horwath. Here's the 101 on Tabuns:

- Studied political science at York University
- Became active in community affairs in the Riverdale community in Toronto
- Served on Toronto City Council from 1990 to 1997
- He lost his seat on Toronto City Council in the 1997 election following amalgamation to Jack Layton
- From 1999 to 2004 he served as Executive Director of Greenpeace Canada
- He was elected to the Ontario legislature in a by-election in 2006 holding the Toronto Danforth seat for the NDP
- He was re-elected to the Ontario legislature in 2007, 2011, 2014, 2018 and 2022
- In 2009 he ran for the leadership of the ONDP losing to Andrea Horwath
- With more than 16 years as an MPP under his belt, he has served in a wide variety of critic portfolios
- He is age 70

LEHMAN PONDERES BID FOR LIBERAL LEADERSHIP

You will know that I think highly of the Liberal candidate in the Barrie-Springwater-Oro Medonte riding, Jeff Lehman. I've met him a number of times at Barrie Construction Association events and have been impressed.

An economist and planner by profession, Lehman was elected to Barrie City Council in 2006, was elected Mayor in 2010 garnering 39% of the popular vote, was re-elected in 2014 with 92.3% of the popular vote and again in 2018 with 91% of the popular vote.

In the recent Ontario general election he lost in a

tight race to the incumbent and highly competent Attorney General Doug Downey (this might be the only riding in the province where there were two extremely competent candidates you could have proudly cast your ballot for).

It's rumoured that the smart, articulate and highly electable Lehman is contemplating a run for the leadership of the Ontario Liberal Party. With his track record of accomplishment in Barrie and no attachment to the scandal plagued former Wynne and McGuinty governments holding him down, Lehman would be a credible candidate.