

BC New Democrats Take Government in Historic Transition

John Horgan sworn in as Premier of British Columbia

July 19, 2017

John Horgan was officially sworn in as Premier, with the intention of leading a socially progressive BC government for the next four years focused on families, improved access to social services and job growth. Today marks the next step, and not necessarily the last step in this unfolding political drama.

After a tightly fought general election, where the Liberals emerged with a razor-thin plurality, the NDP and the Green Party entered into an agreement to bring down the BC Liberal government. In the four-year agreement, the Greens will support the government during budget votes and other matters of confidence, but this does not provide for a formal coalition government, i.e. no Green MLAs will serve in cabinet, nor will they sit as part of the government.

With a minority hold on power in the legislature, where every vote counts, caucus and cabinet management, the health of every member, as well as the ongoing support of every MLA matters.

While today's ceremony puts to rest questions on which party will take power following the general election, prolonged uncertainty can be expected. With the Speaker to be elected from the government benches, the balance of the NDP/Greens will hold the same number of seats as the Opposition Liberals (43 seats), which may require the Speaker to regularly break tie votes.

By convention, Speakers vote with the government during tie-breaking scenarios, but only if this maintains the status quo.

Any MLA seat lost would threaten the government's and the opposition's survival. The seat standings will provide the Government and Opposition Whips with prominent roles in ensuring full attendance of MLAs during confidence votes.

While the new government inherits a balanced budget and a strong economy, it faces a number of immediate challenges. These include confronting the effects of the wildfires in the province, the opioid crisis, balancing environmental commitments on restricting liquefied natural gas and oil exports with national pressures from Alberta and Ottawa, and introducing a framework for dealing with legalized cannabis.

Cabinet Analysis

Horgan's cabinet represents a gender-balanced and ethnically diverse governing team. With only one member with cabinet experience, the new NDP government has a lot of fresh faces and steep learning curves.

With the vast majority of NDP MLA's elected in ridings located within the party's stronghold regions of Vancouver Island, and in the Lower Mainland, many members of cabinet were drawn from these regions. Three of the four MLAs who represent ridings outside of these regions were appointed to cabinet.

Key Appointments

Advanced Education, Skills and Training - Melanie Mark

Attorney General - David Eby

Education - Rob Fleming

Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources - Michelle Mungall

Environment and Climate Change Strategy - George Heyman

Finance and Deputy Premier - Carole James

Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations, and Rural Development - Doug Donaldson

Health - Adrian Dix

Jobs, Trade, and Technology - Bruce Ralston

Mental Health and Addictions - Judy Darcy

Municipal Affairs and Housing - Selina Robinson

Public Safety and Solicitor General - Mike Farnworth

The full cabinet list can be found at: <https://goo.gl/3fhguJ>.

Counsel's new **Principal and Vice President, Western Canada, Brad Lavigne**, was in attendance at the swearing-in ceremony.

For any questions, contact Brad at 403-437-3801 or blavigne@counselpa.com