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**Strengthening the Team at Home and Abroad:
PM Trudeau's First Major Cabinet Shuffle**

Just over a week into the new year, the Trudeau government has sent a strong signal to the Canadian public and our international partners. The upcoming inauguration of U.S. president-elect Donald Trump has presented Prime Minister Trudeau with a unique opportunity to move strong ministers into roles that will be critical for building an effective working relationship with our closest neighbor. It also allows Trudeau and his team to address some of the challenges his team has faced, despite the Cabinet being sworn in just 14 months ago.

Perhaps the biggest shake-up is the appointment of **Chrystia Freeland** to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, one of the most prestigious roles in Cabinet. This move is not as surprising as it might seem, as Freeland's work on the EU trade deal and skilful navigation of some eleventh-hour obstacles solidified her standing as a strong advocate for an open Canada – one of the Prime Minister's key initiatives. It is also worth noting that Freeland is not exactly in Putin's good books: the MP has been banned from travelling to Russia as a result of her pro-Ukraine activities. Her appointment to Foreign Affairs is a revealing reiteration of Trudeau's public affirmation to remain "firm and cautious" in re-engaging with Russia.

Rookie **François-Philippe Champagne** from the Quebec riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain will replace her as Minister of international trade. A lawyer and international trade specialist, Champagne is well qualified for the role, though Freeland will clearly be the senior player in their necessarily close working relationship. In fact, Freeland will retain the Canada-U.S. relations file, including trade relations.

At Foreign Affairs, Freeland is replacing one of the last of the 'old Liberal guard': **Stéphane Dion**. An elected MP for the riding of Saint-Laurent—Cartierville in Montreal since 1996, Dion is leaving politics and has been offered the post of Canada's ambassador to the European Union and Germany. While Dion has not yet officially accepted the position, it should still be considered a well-deserved honor after many decades of service. Dion has weathered several controversies while at Foreign Affairs, but perhaps most relevant to today's Cabinet shuffle is Dion's trademark inflexibility, exemplified by his recent criticism of president-elect Trump's stance on climate change: a critique that Donald Trump will likely take as personally as he does all critiques. And Trudeau needs to reassure his closest trading partner that a strong foundation for their international relationship is his priority.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister **John McCallum** is also leaving politics and will be named Canada's ambassador to China. A veteran MP and former bank economist, McCallum performed well in Cabinet, particularly in handling the Syrian refugee response. His new role in China will be vital for maintaining relations with the world's other economic super-power following the Trump election and the potential demise of the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement (which did not include China and was intended as a counterbalance). With Dion and McCallum, two highly admired parliamentarians, stepping down the clock is now ticking on by-elections in what have long been Liberal strongholds.

The vacancy at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship will be filled by another MP newly elected in 2015, **Ahmed Hussen** from Toronto's York South-Weston. Hussen, who arrived in Canada alone as a war refugee at 16, then completed high school, university and a law degree in his new country, was elected Canada's first Somali-Canadian MP in 2015. He's proven himself to be dedicated, determined, and a passionate community leader.

Similar praise can be said of fellow rookie **Karina Gould**, a former trade and development worker who represents the riding of Burlington, Ontario. Gould has been promoted to the position of minister of Democratic Institutions from her previous role as parliamentary secretary to the minister of International Development.

Meanwhile, **Maryam Monsef**, the Ontario MP for Peterborough-Kawartha, has been shuffled over from Democratic Institutions to Status of Women after criticism of her handling of the electoral reform file.

And Employment, Workforce Development and Labour Minister **MaryAnn Mihychuk** has lost her post, which follows on the heels of August's mini-shuffle that saw the downgrading of several of Mihychuk's duties. She will be replaced by **Patty Hadju** from Thunder Bay-Superior North, who was previously responsible for the Status of Women.

It's clear that Trudeau's team hopes these new appointments will help to attract international investment and encourage Canadian companies to export, while presenting Canada as a welcoming home for immigrants and refugees – a direct and intended contrast to the narrative emerging among several contenders of the federal Conservative leadership campaign.

Overall, this shuffle demonstrates that the government is taking nothing for granted as they head into the critical second year of their mandate. While still leading in the polls, the media honeymoon is over following the "cash for access" issue and poor handling of the democratic reform file. The shuffle also proves that the Trudeau government will not hesitate to make major changes in order to keep their focus on getting the big issues right.

A full list of the updated Cabinet can be found here:
<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/cabinet> / <http://pm.gc.ca/fra/cabinet>

PM Trudeau's statement on changes to the Ministry can be found here:
<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/01/10/statement-prime-minister-canada-changes-ministry>

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