

**Summer Revamp in Ontario:
Murray resignation sees shake-up in Wynne Cabinet**

Ballard moves to Environment while Milczyn is elevated to Housing

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Amidst the dog days of summer (having arrived at long last in Southern Ontario), there's always the possibility of some drama at Queen's Park. The revelation on Sunday night that Glen Murray was resigning immediately as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and that he will be resigning as MPP of Toronto Centre on September 1st necessitated a small but pronounced Cabinet shakeup for the Ontario Liberal government.

Murray, an independent and at times impulsive voice in Cabinet, was nevertheless a passionate and committed champion for the climate change file. His handling of this major government priority was broadly effective, and his management of the portfolio was both widely praised by environmental groups and grudgingly respected by industry stakeholders impacted by the government's ambitious climate change policies.

The Wynne government moved swiftly to allay these concerns by announcing that Chris Ballard, the current Minister of Housing, will be taking over Murray's former portfolio. Ballard, a Town of Aurora Councillor elected as part of the 2014 freshman class, is anticipated to be an effective choice for managing the government's signature climate change plan. Ballard is a strong communicator whose handling of the government's recently enacted Rent Control reforms earned him high marks among key decision-makers in the Premier's Office. In contrast to Murray, Ballard has a reputation as a "team player" who will be more willing to work in close collaboration with the Premier's Office to shape and roll-out the government's environmental narrative.

To assume Minister Ballard's responsibilities for Housing, the Premier chose to elevate Etobicoke-Lakeshore MPP Peter Milczyn to Cabinet, marking the end of a winding journey to the inner circle for the former City of Toronto Councillor. Milczyn has performed capably as Parliamentary Assistant to the Ministers of Labour, Infrastructure and Finance since his election in 2014. Milczyn will inherit the always-challenging affordable housing portfolio, where in addition to implementing the new Rent Control policies, he will be expected to navigate the ongoing woes of Toronto Community Housing, of particular importance for him as a Toronto MPP, and the implementation of the affordable housing funding windfall announced by Ottawa in the 2017 Federal Budget.

Meanwhile, Murray will be taking on a new role as the Executive Director of the Pembina Institute. At Pembina, a leading Canadian environmental think tank, Murray will have the freedom and latitude to comment on and influence climate change policy across Canada. Although Murray was not expected to run for re-election in 2018, many environmental groups are no doubt still unsettled by the Minister's suddenly announced departure.