

## Ontario Premier Wynne's Post-Election Cabinet Shuffle Brings in New Environment and Natural Resources Ministers



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*On June 12, 2014, Ontario Premier Wynne won a majority government with 58 out of a possible 107 seats. In the post-election cabinet shuffle, Premier Wynne replaced long-time veteran Jim Bradley with Glen Murray as the new Environment Minister. Mr. Murray, the former mayor of Winnipeg, was previously responsible for the Transportation and Infrastructure portfolios. Premier Wynne also brought in Bill Mauro as the new Minister of Natural Resources. Despite the change in Ministers, we expect that various environmental Bills and initiatives already in the pipeline or that died when the provincial election was called in May will feature in next week's Throne Speech.*

### Picking Up Where They Left Off

The new Environment Minister will likely re-introduce the following key environmental Bills that died when the provincial election was called on May 2

- ◆ Bill 6, the *Great Lakes Protection Act, 2014*– proposed to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin
- ◆ Bill 91, the *Waste Reduction Act, 2013* – proposed to promote the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste derived from products, and
- ◆ Bill 138, the *Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2013* – proposed to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities.

Bill Mauro is expected to re-introduce another important environmental Bill, the proposed *Invasive Species Act*, as the new Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Bill 167 would give the government greater authority to prevent, control or eradicate invasive species.

Madeleine Meilleur, who stays on as Attorney General and Francophone Affairs Minister, will likely re-introduce Bill 83, the *Protection of Public Participation Act, 2014*. Bill 83 is designed to prevent the phenomenon of “strategic litigation against public participation”, which are lawsuits brought by deep-pocketed industries or companies with the specific aim of silencing resource-poor citizens and public interest groups. The Bill would protect expression on matters of public interest. It would also discourage the use of litigation as a means of unduly limiting expression on matters of public interest.

### Implementing the Budget and Election Platform

During the election, the Liberals released a plan to invest \$15 billion to improve transit (such as GO Transit in the GTA). The plan also would invest a further \$14 billion towards improving

roads, bridges, highways – and to kick-start the resource-rich “Ring of Fire” region in northern Ontario. On the energy side, the Liberals focused more on energy conservation and managing the high costs of utilities to citizens and businesses. Now re-elected, the Liberal government plans to expand the incentive programs to lower electricity usage in the province.

The Liberals also criticized Stephen Harper’s federal Conservative government, stating that the Conservatives “have gutted Canada’s environmental safety net, have failed to take climate change seriously”. However, the Liberal plan provided no details on how it would take climate change seriously, other than to promise that the Wynne government would “show leadership in tackling climate change”. As Environment Minister, Mr. Murray has been tasked with formulating the plan to “show leadership”.

The Liberal election platform also set out the following initiatives for ensuring smart and liveable communities, under the heading, “Sustainable Communities”

- ◆ encourage smarter growth, including ensuring that new residential development projects provide more revenue for transit
- ◆ develop and support school-community hubs to promote efficient use of public assets and ensure that more viable schools are able to remain open
- ◆ invest \$30 million to keep the Walkerton Clean Water Centre on the cutting edge of clean water training and research
- ◆ expand the Greenbelt and Ontario’s trail network
- ◆ promote urban forestry by planting one million trees
- ◆ create the “farms forever” program to protect prime agricultural land close to urban centres, and
- ◆ protect the Great Lakes, including making beaches clean and safe.

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