

Enterprise¹
Canada

NOVA SCOTIA'S
**Historic New
Cabinet**

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Nova Scotia's New Cabinet

As Premier Tim Houston crosses the two-year threshold of his first mandate and in the shadow of a historic by-election victory for his Progressive Conservative team in the constituency of Preston, the timing made sense for routine maintenance to keep the right team to deliver Solutions for Nova Scotians.

Per the latest polls from Narrative Research and Angus Reid, Houston remains popular personally, and Nova Scotians continue to be satisfied with his government's performance. He has little reason to rock the boat and initiate a significant shake-up.

Houston announced Thursday morning that he would make several changes to Nova Scotia's roster of Ministers and Deputy Ministers, including new and more diverse faces and the retirement of some of the province's most seasoned politicians.

Who's In



Twila Grosse

Following her historic victory in a by-election in the Preston riding last month, the smart money believed Grosse would quickly find a seat at the cabinet table. They don't call it smart money for no reason.

Grosse, who comes from a large, well-known family in the Cherry Brook area, worked for over thirty-six years at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport, struck while the anti-carbon tax iron was hot, securing the Preston seat for the Progressive Conservatives for the first time in twenty years.

Being the only African Nova Scotian in Houston's caucus, she's now responsible for the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs. This move should surprise no one, given the controversy that followed Houston and former Minister Pat Dunn when Dunn, a white man, was appointed to that position in 2021.

Grosse is also the Minister of the Public Service Commission, a role she's inheriting from Colton LeBlanc, who's likely keen to spend more time on his recently expanded responsibilities as Minister of Healthcare Redevelopment.

Grosse has become the first female African Nova Scotian member of the Nova Scotia Executive Council.



Kent Smith

Smith represents the riding of Eastern Shore, a seat he first won in the 2021 PC victory wave that swept rural and suburban Nova Scotia. He's been a rising star in committees, effectively advancing the Government agenda and demonstrating an ability to communicate articulately and push back on opposition parties.

He assumes the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture role from Steve Craig, who confirmed to CBC on Wednesday that he would not seek re-election in the next general election.



Trevor Boudreau

Boudreau, like Smith, was elected in 2021, representing Richmond, a riding in south-eastern Cape Breton designed to represent the historic French community. A former municipal politician and Chiropractor, he's no "slouch" to the political scene in the province. He, too, has been an effective team player on the Government bench in committees serving as chair of the Health Committee.

Richmond also encompasses the town of Port Hawkesbury and the Strait of Canso, an area emerging with innovation, industry, and energy production including North America's first Green Hydrogen un-official headquarters.

He's taking command of the Department of Community Services, a portfolio that hasn't been without trouble for the PC Government amidst a challenging housing and cost-of-living environment. He will also be responsible for L'nu Affairs.

Who's Out



Karla MacFarlane

The Department of Community Services Minister will become the province's first ever female speaker, when the Legislature resumes on Thursday, October 12th. After the 2021 election, MacFarlane was expected to seek the job of speaker before being named to cabinet.



Keith Bain

The long-time Cape Breton politician was dragged to the Speakers' chair in 2021, a seat that hasn't been without its ebbs and flows with the Premier's office. He will resign as speaker on the first day of the upcoming session to make way for MacFarlane.



Steve Craig

The councillor-turned-provincial politician confirmed he would not be re-offering in the next general election. He's stepping back from his Ministerial role but continuing to serve as the MLA for Sackville-Cobequid for the remainder of his term.

With Fisheries and Aquaculture in Nova Scotia not immune from hot tempers in recent years, Craig was able to offer a steady hand on a lucrative and often explosive file.



Pat Dunn

The longest-serving member on the PC bench - and only two-term Minister - confirmed that he would also relinquish his cabinet duties as Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage and Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs but continue to serve his term representing the people of Pictou Centre.

First elected in 2006, Dunn has consistently provided steady guidance and sage advice on rural Nova Scotian politics. After the NDP swept to power in 2009, Dunn clawed the seat back in 2013 alongside a fresh-faced Tim Houston, ushering in a Pictou County tory sweep.

Who's Busier Than Before



Allan MacMaster

He's now responsible for Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, as well as serving as Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, and will retain responsibility for Labour Relations, and Gaelic Affairs.



Barbara Adams

She's now responsible for Military Relations, in addition to the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care.



Jill Balsler

In addition to her role as Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration, she's now responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.



Creation of Executive Deputy Minister Position

As is often the case, many of the farthest-reaching changes are taking place behind the scenes within the structure of Nova Scotia's public service.

Paul Lafleche, Dana MacKenzie, Tracey Taweel, and Kelliann Dean, all former Deputy Ministers, will now become Executive Deputy Ministers, and will report to Laura Lee Langley who remains head of the Public Service and Deputy Minister reporting to the Premier.

These four will no longer be responsible for specific departments. Instead, they will work closely with the Premier's senior leadership and dedicated policy-focused political staff to focus on broader files to advance the Government's priorities within the bureaucracy.

This restructuring will likely provide the Premier's Office with a more direct conduit to the inner workings of departmental operations and executives within the public service.

Two new Deputy Ministers come by way of prominent health care roles including Tracey Barbrick at Seniors and Long-Term Care and Kathleen Trott who takes over at Addictions and Mental Health after serving as ADM at Health and Wellness.

Other new Deputy Ministers include Byron Rafuse at Municipal Affairs and Housing, Melissa MacKinnon at Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, Jennifer Church at the Office of Priorities and Planning. Ryan Grant is now Deputy Minister at Advanced Education and Lesley O'Brien-Latham in Fisheries and Aquaculture is now in as acting DM.

Nancy MacLellan (Advanced Education) and April Howe (Fisheries and Aquaculture) have left the public service.

No Changes in Healthcare, Housing, Finance

Houston's meteoric rise in the polls during the summer 2021 Election, fueled by his promise to improve healthcare delivery in Nova Scotia, apparently resonated with Nova Scotians, who bestowed him a majority mandate.

Before Houston's first Progressive Conservative Cabinet, one Minister was responsible for the entire healthcare system. Houston and his leadership team decided to split healthcare into three positions:

- The Department of Health & Wellness, falling to Michelle Thompson, a Registered Nurse and Health Administrator
- The Office of Addictions & Mental Health, falling to Brian Comer, a Registered Mental Health Nurse
- The Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care, falling to Barbara Adams, a Physiotherapist

While opposition parties have criticized Houston for inaction and a lack of innovation in healthcare delivery, – and despite an undeniably challenging healthcare staffing climate from coast to coast - Houston believes he has the right team to effect change in healthcare delivery in Nova Scotia. He can point to an expansion of virtual care, access to expedited emergency mental health services and a pharmacy pilot program that allows greater community access and less reliance on doctor and emergency room visits to cure minor ailments.

There are no changes of note for ministers across healthcare-related files aside from Barbara Adams assuming additional responsibilities, such as the Minister responsible for Military Relations. It's likely no coincidence that Adams was the Chair of Ms. Grosse's successful Preston by-election campaign.

Make no mistake, however, that Houston and his Government continue to focus on healthcare, illustrated by the increase in healthcare spending in Fiscal 2022-23. Total expenses rose by \$1.3B, with healthcare making up the lion's share at just shy of \$400M.

Houston has chosen to stay the course on Housing where John Lohr remains responsible to working with municipalities on this increasingly challenging file. While Nova Scotia has not been immune to the housing challenges facing

other provinces, Lohr remains well regarded in government for providing a steady and experienced hand on the file.

In addition to his expanded role as Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, Allan MacMaster continues as Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier while Tim Halman retains his role as the Chair of the Province's powerful Treasury and Policy Board.

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