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John MacDonell takes over two major portfolios

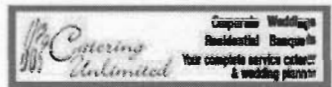
Abby Cameron



HANTS EAST: John MacDonell is a critic no more. After the Hants East NDP MLA served as agriculture critic for the opposition NDP, MacDonell has switched roles and assumed the position of Minister of Agriculture after his party secured a majority government in the provincial election June 9. He also picked up the Natural Resources portfolio as well. "I have two very interesting departments," he said. "I'm really looking forward to getting started." Shortly after the election, Premier Darrell Dexter began selecting his cabinet, interviewing each of the 30 candidates before selecting a small cabinet of 12, including himself. MLAs were informed of their postings on June 19 and were sworn in that evening at a ceremony in Halifax.

MacDonell says it's during that interview he felt confident about his postings. "I had been critic for Natural Resources for seven years, from 1999 to 2006. Even though I have been away from it for a few years I feel an attachment to some of the issues and I know I have a feel for the department," he said. Dexter's cabinet will have much more on their plates than the outgoing Conservatives, who boasted 18 cabinet members. Despite the added responsibility, MacDonell says it's a challenge he is up for. MacDonell says he has complete faith in the cabinet, including rookie Ross Landry from Pictou Centre, a former RCMP Staff Sergeant. Landry also holds a law degree and has assumed the Justice Portfolio. "We have an excellent group of people and I feel privileged to be among them," he said. "We also have a strong leader and that is an important key." Ramona Jennex, Kings South MLA has taken on several portfolios, including Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. She will also be responsible for immigration and emergency management. Chester- St. Margaret's Bay representative Denise Paterson-Rafuse has been named as the Minister of Community Services. Other posts have gone to Frank Corbett, who assumes the role as deputy premier and Public Service Commission and will continue serving as House Leader. Maureen MacDonald will serve as Health Minister and will also be in charge of Health Promotion and Protection and Gaelic Affairs. Other ministers include Bill Estabrooks who takes on Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Energy and is also responsible for the Atlantic Gateway Initiative and the Sydney Tar Ponds Agency. Graham Steele will take on Finance and be responsible for Acadian Affairs and the Nova Scotia Liquor Corp. Marilyn More has been named the Minister of Education and Labour and Workforce Development. Sterling Belliveau will handle the Environment and Fisheries and Aquaculture portfolios. Percy Paris will serve as the Minister for Economic and Rural Development, Tourism and Culture Heritage. He is also in charge of African-Nova Scotian Affairs. MacDonell had his first cabinet meeting on June 22 and has spent most of his time being briefed on his two portfolios. acameron@enfieldweeklypress.com





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