

# Opposition doesn't like 'recycling' of ministers

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THE TELEGRAM

A "recycling" of ministers back into portfolios they once held means there's not a lot of depth in Danny Williams' caucus. Opposition Leader Yvonne Jones says.

Neither Jones nor NDP Leader Lorraine Michael were impressed with Friday's shuffling of cabinet.

Eight ministers were given new jobs, while one, Grand Falls-Windsor-Buchans MHA Susan Sullivan, was appointed to cabinet for the first time.

Absent from the shuffle were Health and Community Services Minister Ross Wiseman and Education Minister Joan Burke, both having been criticized in recent months: Burke for her involvement in Memorial University's selection process for a new president; Wiseman for his handling of information about inaccurate hormone receptor tests for breast cancer patients.

## Public confidence

"If the premier really wanted to gain the confidence of the public, as he said at the Cameron Inquiry, he would have changed the minister in this portfolio," Michael said Friday. "Now the onus is on the health minister to prove that people can have confidence once again in our health-care system."

Jones said she would have liked to see Innovation, Trade and Rural Development Minister Shawn Skinner take over the Health portfolio, saying he would have provided good leadership for the department.

Keeping Burke in Education doesn't serve the education community nor the public, Jones said.

She said she wasn't surprised to see Jerome Kennedy shuffled out of the Department of Justice.

"Jerome Kennedy has had a very bulldog approach to both the judicial system and the legal community since he's been there," she said. "I think the confrontational behaviour of Minister Kennedy was not serving the department well, or the portfolio well. We felt that he needed to move, and we're glad he is."

## Troubled times

How Kennedy will fare as new minister of Finance, Jones said, remains to be seen.

"With the nurses' strike looming, the move to put him there might have been because of his bulldog approach and his confrontational approach to issues and individuals," she said.

"This (shuffling) tells me that even in a caucus of 44, there's not a lot of depth. If there was, (Williams) wouldn't have to be recycling ministers back into portfolios."

## Bargaining concerns

Michael, too, expressed concern that the finance minister has been changed in the middle of negotiations with public-sector unions. One of her other main concerns was the effect the changes will have on social programs. The housing program has been taken from the responsibility of the Department of Human Resources, Employment and Labour and moved to Transportation and Works, and Michael fears crucial social programs will be undermined as a result.

"The change makes no sense. I am quite surprised, especially when government touts poverty reduction as one of its key focuses," she said.

## Welcome addition

Michael was pleased to see the addition of another woman to cabinet and Kathy Dunderdale's appointment to deputy premier.

Leslie MacLeod, president of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, said she was "absolutely delighted" to see Dunderdale named minister responsible for the status of women.

"Minister Dunderdale has a long history in the women's community, in the feminist community. We have intersected in the past, and I'm very much looking forward to meeting with her in her new role very soon," MacLeod said.