

Sylvia Jones hits the ground running as cabinet takes shape

Written By SCOTT TAYLOR

"These are early days," cautioned Ontario's new minister of tourism, culture and sport, Sylvia Jones. The Dufferin-Caledon MPP, who won her riding for the fourth consecutive time in the recent provincial election, now finds herself a cabinet minister. She is one of 21 ministers in Premier Doug Ford's cabinet; an honour and a sign of appreciation from the premier for being an active, engaged member of the opposition for more than 10 years.

The landslide results, surprising to some who predicted a closer race with the second-place NDP, was a clear indication from voters that change was needed.

"I think the people of Ontario and Dufferin-Caledon made it very clear that they were looking for a change in government, a change in direction," she said, "and Premier Ford has been very decisive on that already with some announcements that are already going to make a difference to the people of Ontario and their ability to make a living and be cost-effective in that. Pretty exciting days ahead."

Ms. Jones added Ontarians were demanding change after 15 years of Liberal rule and what some would describe as reckless spending of taxpayers' money.

"It's an indication of what the people of Ontario were looking for. They were demanding change and we're going to give that to them . . . There is a commitment that if you live and work in the province of Ontario, we're going to try to make your life easier and cheaper."

She saw the tide turning this time around as she knocked on doors. Though the riding is clearly Conservative leaning, there was more passion for change and a feeling the Wynne government had forgotten about them.

"I was obviously thrilled that people had put their faith in me once again. When I went door to door and when I was talking to people, lots of frustration. There was a pent-up frustration with a government that wasn't listening or wasn't focusing on things that were impacting them and their families. If I remember and take away anything from the last 10 years it's when you stop listening to the people who you serve, it does not end well."

As for her plans as a minister, Jones asked for a little time.

"As you can imagine, it's very early days. I'm into my second day of briefings and meetings and meeting the ministerial staff and I've been very impressed with their knowledge and desire, frankly, to make sure that the service we're providing here makes Ontario a stronger and better place to be."

The call to cabinet might have been unexpected but appreciated all the same.

"I'm always pleasantly surprised. You work first and foremost to represent the views of your constituents and my riding and by doing that I think I showed Premier Ford that I was willing to work and be part of his team and I'm just thrilled to be chosen to serve."