

Times, they certainly are a changing. Just ask Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who made the decision to change almost seventy-five percent of his cabinet by removing seven ministers from their respective positions, reassigning some of the remaining ones and combining major portfolios for others. One thing that did not change was the size of cabinet at thirty-eight members and its noted gender parity of nineteen women and nineteen men, a monumental first for Canada back in 2015 (when the cabinet was made up of thirty members).

The swearing-in ceremony took place at Rideau Hall on the morning of Wednesday, July 26<sup>th</sup>. This comes at an especially volatile time, amidst scandals in our own backyard and particularly tense relations overseas. Then again, Trudeau is no stranger to cabinet shuffles as he has done so many a time since he was first sworn into office in 2015. Two of the aforementioned cabinet changes – occurring in 2018 and 2021 – were quite crucial and notable. This week's shuffle is yet another significant change, and not just because a large number of its members are leaving, which is concerning enough on its own. The timing of this would seem to be on schedule with past shuffles that coincided with upcoming elections. Trudeau is well aware of the issues his cabinet and the country at large faces. Speaking to this on Wednesday, Trudeau told reporters, "Bringing in fresh energy with new members and new challenges was important for our economic team in particular. We're facing significant economic challenges - housing, the cost-of-living inflation and interest rates." The next election is set to take place in 2025, but that is not a surety. Trudeau could choose to gamble and announce an early election. However, given the Liberals current popularity in public support, compared to that of the Conservatives, it would not be a wise decision.

The results of an Abacus Data survey were released this past Wednesday with Conservatives leading the Liberals with 38% to 28% in public support. Those numbers would be more than enough for Trudeau and his Liberals to see a defeat. Consequently, one could assume it almost safe to say that the calling of an early election could be ruled out, but nothing is absolute, especially in politics. Reassuringly, Trudeau insists that the cabinet shuffle was about, "Putting forward the strongest possible team, with fresh energy, and a range of skills." The new team held a cabinet meeting the same afternoon of the announcement. This is something that Trudeau has done in past years, a kind of outward signal that the team are serious about business, so much so that they're immediately getting down to it. However, seeing as Canadians are halfway through this government's current mandate, one wonders how much change they should expect to see and when?

Political experts have suggested that they do not anticipate a substantial change in the Liberals' overall direction of governing. Nevertheless, the fact that only 8 of the 38 cabinet members still remain in their previous role is a considerable difference, no matter how one may slice it. However, are these shifts merely cosmetic and ineffective as opposed to meaningful maintenance? Only time will tell if the adjustments made to Trudeau's cabinet will be beneficial to Canadians at large. At a time of severe housing affordability issues, the cost of living steadily rising, health care concerns abounding, grocery prices skyrocketing, household debt in Canada being the highest of any G7 country and a host of other real and pressing concerns, Canadians deserve to know that their government have things handled. At the very least, they should feel confident in knowing their government are able to switch gears and re-calibrate, should pertinent matters of one's life be improperly managed and addressed.