

## **The Honourable Chuck Strahl**

### **Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians**

Chilliwack–Fraser Canyon (British Columbia)

Chuck Strahl was first elected to Parliament in 1993. He was re-elected in 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2006. On February 6, 2006, Mr. Strahl was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board. In 2004, Mr. Strahl was selected by his parliamentary colleagues to serve as Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and Chairman of Committees of the Whole.

Previous to becoming Deputy Speaker, Mr. Strahl was Critic for Democratic Reform, for Northern Economic Development, for Cultural Industries, for the Deputy Prime Minister, for Industry and for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

He was also Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and a member of the standing committees on Fisheries and Oceans, on Canadian Heritage, on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and on Natural Resources.

Mr. Strahl also served as Deputy Caucus Coordinator and Chief Whip of the Official Opposition. He served as the Official Opposition House Leader for the Canadian Alliance from January 2000 until April 2001.

Mr. Strahl was born in British Columbia in 1957 and was raised in the Fraser Valley. Prior to his election, he was a logging contractor.

He and his wife, Deb, have four children.

## **The Honourable Peter Gordon MacKay**

### **Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency**

Central Nova (Nova Scotia)

Peter MacKay was first elected to Parliament in 1997. He was re-elected in 2000, 2004 and 2006. On February 6, 2006, Mr. MacKay was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

In his first five years in the House of Commons, Mr. MacKay served as House Leader for the Progressive Conservative caucus.

On May 31, 2003, Mr. MacKay became Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. In March 2004, following the unification of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance Party, he was named Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and was renamed Deputy Leader following the June 2004 election.

Mr. MacKay was born in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. After graduating with an arts degree from Acadia University in 1987, he went on to study law at Dalhousie University. He was called to the Nova Scotia Bar in June 1991.

With strong family ties to the local area, he returned to New Glasgow to open a private law practice specializing in criminal and family law. In 1993, he accepted an appointment as Crown Attorney for the Central Region of Nova Scotia. He prosecuted cases at all levels, including youth and provincial courts as well as the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. MacKay has served on volunteer boards including New Leaf and Tearmann House. As well he has been active in Big Brothers-Big Sisters, the Pictou County Senior Rugby Club and the YMCA.

A sports enthusiast, Mr. MacKay enjoys rugby, baseball, football and hockey.

## **The Honourable Gordon O'Connor**

### **Minister of National Revenue**

Carleton–Mississippi Mills (Ontario)

Gordon O'Connor was first elected to the House of Commons in 2004 and re-elected in 2006 in the riding of Carleton–Mississippi Mills. On February 6, 2006, Mr. O'Connor was appointed Minister of National Defence.

Before being elected to Parliament Mr. O'Connor had several careers in the private and public sectors. Most notably he served Canada as a military officer for over 30 years, joining the Regular Army as a Second Lieutenant in the Armour Branch, and retiring at the rank of Brigadier General. One of Mr. O'Connor's last appointments before retirement included responsibility for planning the future force structure of the Canadian Forces.

Born in Toronto, Mr. O'Connor received a Bachelor of Sciences in Mathematics and Physics from Concordia University and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from York University. He has been a resident of Kanata, Ontario, for over 20 years, is married and has two children.

## **The Honourable Beverley J. Oda**

### **Minister of International Cooperation**

Durham (Ontario)

Beverley Oda was first elected to Parliament in 2004 and was re-elected in 2006. On February 6, 2006, Ms. Oda was appointed Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women. Previous to this, she served in Opposition as the Critic for Canadian Heritage and as a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Before her election, Ms. Oda spent more than two decades in the fields of public and private broadcasting. In 1999, she was appointed senior Vice-President, Industry Affairs, at CTV. From 1987 to 1993 she served as a commissioner with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

Ms. Oda began her broadcasting career at TVOntario in 1973. In 1976 she moved to the field of commercial broadcasting. She has also worked as a consultant in the areas of multiculturalism, diversity and broadcasting.

Ms. Oda was born in Thunder Bay, Ontario, in 1944. She graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Arts. She has served as chair of the Lakeridge Health Hospital Network and is a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal.

## **The Honourable Jim Prentice**

### **Minister of Industry**

Calgary North–Centre (Alberta)

Jim Prentice was elected to the House of Commons in 2004 and was re-elected in 2006. On February 6, 2006, he was appointed Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. Previous to this, Mr. Prentice was the Critic for Indian Affairs and Northern Development and later a member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

He has also served as the Chair of both the Government's Operations Committee and the Environment and Energy Security Committee of Cabinet, and as a member of the Priorities and Planning and Social Affairs committees.

A lawyer by profession, Mr. Prentice has specialized in property rights and has focused on relocations, environmental protection suits and restricted development areas. He also served as a commissioner of the Indian Specific Claims Commission of Canada for 10 years and is recognized by his peers as an expert in land claims negotiations. Mr. Prentice travelled to South Africa twice as an expert adviser on how to protect property rights in that country's new constitution.

Mr. Prentice holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Alberta and a Bachelor of Laws from Dalhousie University.

Raised in Northern Ontario and Alberta, Mr. Prentice is married to Karen and they have three daughters.

## **The Honourable Maxime Bernier**

### **Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Beauce (Quebec)

Maxime Bernier, first elected to the House of Commons in 2006, was appointed Minister of Industry on February 6, 2006.

Before his election, Mr. Bernier was Vice-President of Corporate Affairs and Communications for Standard Life of Canada insurance company, and Director of Business and International Relations at the Commission des valeurs mobilières du Québec. He has worked for financial and banking institutions and has provided advice on their behalf on various legislative issues.

Mr. Bernier is a lawyer with a bachelor's degree in commerce. He was a member of the board of the Montreal Economic Institute and is a member of several charitable organizations. He was born and raised in Beauce, Quebec.

## **The Honourable Josée Verner**

### **Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages**

Louis–Saint-Laurent (Quebec)

Josée Verner was first elected as a Member of Parliament for the riding of Louis–Saint-Laurent in 2006. On February 6, 2006, she was appointed Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for La Francophonie and Official Languages.

In addition to being the chair of the Quebec Caucus for the Conservative Party of Canada, in June of 2004 she was named the spokesperson for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Region of Quebec in Mr. Harper's shadow cabinet. This was expanded to also include the Official Languages portfolio in September 2005.

Ms. Verner has spent close to 20 years in the communications and public service fields. She worked for former Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa and for the deputy speaker of Quebec's National Assembly, as well as at the provincial Ministry of Health and Social Services.

Ms. Verner is deeply involved in her community, and has spent a significant amount of time fundraising for the Children's Make A Wish Foundation. She is married with three children.

## **The Honourable Gerry Ritz**

### **Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board**

Battlefords–Lloydminster (Saskatchewan)

Gerry Ritz was first elected to Parliament in 1997. He was re-elected in 2000, 2004 and 2006. On January 4, 2007, Mr. Ritz was appointed Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism).

Before this position, Mr. Ritz served as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food. He has also served as the Critic for Agriculture and Agri-Food and for Public Works and Government Services. Mr. Ritz also held the position of Deputy Whip and Question Period Coordinator for the Official Opposition. He was Chair of the Subcommittee on the Estimates Process and a member of the standing committees on Finance and on Transport, the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business and the Liaison Committee.

During the course of his career, Mr. Ritz has run his own farming operation, owned and operated a general contracting business and co-owned a weekly newspaper. Before entering politics, he worked as constituency coordinator for former Saskatchewan MP Elwin Hermanson. He was actively involved in the Rosetown Economic Development Committee, the Knights of Columbus, and coaching children's hockey.

Mr. Ritz is married to Judy and has two children.

## **The Honourable Diane Ablonczy**

### **Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)**

Calgary–Nose Hill (Alberta)

Diane Ablonczy was first elected to the House of Commons in 1993 and re-elected in 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2006. She was named Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance in February 2006. Previously, Ms. Ablonczy served as Chief Opposition Critic for Citizenship and Immigration and the Critic for Health and for Human Resources Development.

Ms. Ablonczy has served on several standing committees of the House of Commons, including the standing committee on Citizenship and Immigration, on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and on Health. Ms. Ablonczy has served on the House of Commons Finance Committee and on the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Before being elected, Ms. Ablonczy obtained teaching and law degrees from the University of Calgary. She has taught elementary and junior high school, managed a grain farm operation and built a successful law practice.

Ms. Ablonczy grew up in several communities throughout Alberta. She is married to Ron Sauer and has one daughter, four step-children and three grandchildren.