

Vanclief gets cabinet post

Local MP named agriculture minister in Commons today

By Chris Malette

With Canadian Press files

Three-term Liberal MP Lyle Vanclief's rural roots now extend to the federal cabinet.

Vanclief, long touted as a candidate for agriculture minister, saw his dream come true today as he was to be sworn in to that cabinet post in a ceremony at Rideau Hall.

Prime Minister Jean Chretien informed Vanclief of his promotion from the back benches to cabinet Tuesday afternoon, The Intelligencer learned last evening, and Vanclief and wife Sharon left shortly afterward for Ottawa and Vanclief's apartment there.

He was to be sworn in this morning and had declined comment on the appointment until after the Rideau Hall ceremony, which was scheduled for 11 a.m.

Vanclief, 53, was born and raised on his family's farm in Prince Edward County. He operated Willowlee Farms Ltd., a

have to enlarge cabinet beyond its current 34 members to make room for any more — a distinct possibility despite his oft-stated preference for leaner government.

"A couple more in cabinet wouldn't be the end of the world," said one strategist. "You've got a lot of talent on the backbenches and you want to signal that it's possible to move up."

Chretien is also poised to move Sheila Copps out of the deputy prime minister's job, reassign other key ministers and spruce up his cabinet with some other new faces from the backbenches in a shuffle today.

Sources say Copps will keep her Heritage portfolio, which includes responsibility for arts policy and cultural industries and also gives her a say in the federal unity effort in Quebec.

But she will relinquish the title of deputy prime minister to Herb Gray, a veteran considered more adept at brokering policy disputes among ministers and handling day-to-day operations.

"They want him to be a kind of chief executive officer," one insider said of Gray's assignment.



Lyle Vanclief

1,600 acre fruit, vegetable and livestock operation, until 1988 when the farming firm went out of business.

That year, Vanclief was first elected to Parliament, reverting the Prince Edward-Hastings seat to Liberal from the long-held Conservative seat held by Jack Ellis.

Vanclief replaces Saskatchewan MP Ralph Goodale,

a lawyer, in the ag minister's portfolio. Goodale has earned the scorn of western farmers for his decisions on the wheat board, but reports from Ottawa say it's expected Goodale will retain responsibility in his natural resources ministry for the wheat board.

Vanclief served as parliamentary assistant to Goodale for three years and has been chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture and was co-critic for agriculture when Liberals were in Opposition after the 1988 election.

During his tenure as the standing committee chairman, Vanclief earned kudos from senior federal officials for his globe-spanning work on the GATT treaties and their impact on Canadian agriculture and agri-food industries.

Meanwhile, sources in Ottawa said today Chretien would likely

□ Lyle Vanclief, 53, was an easy winner June 2 for third term as Liberal MP for Prince Edward-Hastings.

□ Born and raised on Prince Edward County farm where he now lives.

□ Graduate of Belleville Collegiate Institute and B.Sc. from University of Guelph in agriculture in 1966.

□ Until 1988, Vanclief's family owned and operated 1,600-acre Willowlee Farms Ltd., a fruit, vegetable and livestock operation.

□ Has served as municipal councillor in Ameliasburgh and was past chairman of the township planning board for a number of years.

□ Served 10 years on the Prince Edward County Board of Education as chairman, chairman of the salary negotiating committee.

□ Five years on the Loyalist College Manpower Retraining Program as a director.

□ Elected MP in 1988, he was re-elected in 1993 and has served as chairman of the standing committee on agriculture (1996) and Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture Ralph Goodale. Has also held positions of co-critic for agriculture and as associate critic for public works while in Opposition.

replaced at Justice by Anne McLellan, a former University of Alberta law professor who did well at Natural Resources.

The CBC and CTV said John Manley, stays at Industry, while Victoria's David Anderson heads to Fisheries but it wasn't clear where the former fisheries minister, Fred Mifflin, is headed.

Paul Martin, who like Rock has leadership ambitions, is to continue at Finance and Lloyd Axworthy, the senior minister from the West, is to stay at Foreign Affairs.

Copps, whose aggressive style grated on some colleagues, has held the deputy's job since the Liberals took power in 1993. But those close to her say she will not be sorry to give it up.

Don Boudria, a former whip and junior minister for international affairs, is to take over Gray's old job as House leader — a key one in a Parliament where the Liberal majority is thinner than it was before the June 2 election.

In addition to Copps, several key ministers are moving.

Both CBC-TV's The National and CTV News reported Tuesday that Allan Rock gets the Health posting and is being