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Putin’s ‘Gray Cardinal’ Vyacheslav Volodin ‘to Move from Kremlin To Parliament’

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Vyacheslav Volodin **Kremlin Press Service**

Vyacheslav Volodin, the first deputy chief of President Vladimir Putin’s staff, is to leave for a new role in the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, three sources close to the Kremlin have confirmed to The Moscow Times.

Volodin, who ran in last week's parliamentary election in his native city of Saratov, will most likely move to the position of Duma speaker, a source close to the Kremlin said.

The move will formally be a promotion for Volodin. The position of Duma speaker officially stands fourth in Russia’s hierarchy, ceding only to that of the president, the prime-minister and the speaker of the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the national parliament.

Yet historically, the position of first vice chief of the Kremlin’s staff, overseeing home affairs such as elections, debates in the parliament, NGOs and political institutions, has been arguably even more powerful. Volodin himself was dubbed as Putin's 'gray cardinal' while in the role.

Vyacheslav Volodin was brought in to mastermind Putin’s victory in the 2012 presidential election after the Bolotnaya protests in December 2011.

He was also in charge of the 2016 parliamentary election, which saw the ruling United Russia party win 343 of the Duma's 450 seats: a constitutional super-majority.

His replacement in the Kremlin will be a key figure in Russia’s political scene, and will have time to settle in before the scheduled presidential election in 2018.

The new Duma’s first session is preliminary scheduled for Oct. 5-7.

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