

Doug Ford's right-hand man, PC MPP went to Las Vegas with Greenbelt developer in 2020: sources

Both denied being involved in minister's zoning orders or Greenbelt land removal decisions benefitting the developer



[Charlie Pinkerton](#)

Jun 29, 2023 3:02 PM



Kaleed

Rasheed (middle), a PC MPP and now a cabinet minister, is seen between Premier Doug Ford (left) and developer Shakir Rehmatullah (right) while they shake hands at the unveiling of the Shakir Rehmatullah Cancer Clinic at Markham Stouffville Hospital on Oct. 30, 2018. Premier of Ontario Photography/Flickr

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A top aide to Premier Doug Ford and a Progressive Conservative MPP who is now a cabinet minister went on a trip to Las Vegas in 2020 with developer Shakir Rehmatullah, whose companies have benefited from multiple Ford government decisions including the Greenbelt land swap, sources tell *The Trillium*.

In February 2020, Amin Massoudi was Ford's principal secretary. Kaleed Rasheed [was then midway through his first term](#) as Mississauga East—Cooksville's MPP and was the government caucus' deputy whip.

Information provided to *The Trillium* from multiple independent sources, including ones in the government, linked to it, and unassociated with it, indicated that Rehmatullah, Massoudi and Rasheed were in Las Vegas at the time of the trip. These sources were granted anonymity to protect them against reprisal.

In responding to questions from *The Trillium*, neither Massoudi nor Rasheed denied going on a trip to Las Vegas with Rehmatullah in early 2020. Rehmatullah did not respond to questions sent to him by email before this story was published.

Massoudi and a spokesperson for Rasheed both denied that Rehmatullah paid for trips to Las Vegas in their email responses.

"Minister Rasheed has never taken a trip paid by Mr. Rehmatullah," Rasheed's spokesperson said.

"I have never gone on any trip paid for by Mr. Rehmatullah," Massoudi said.

Neither of them responded before this story was published when asked if they themselves paid for a trip to Las Vegas with Rehmatullah.

A spokesperson for Ford said in a statement that "the premier was not aware (of the trip)."

"The expectation continues to be that all MPPs and staff follow all rules and obligations as set out in legislation," Ford's spokesperson added.

Since 2020, Rehmatullah's Flato Developments, and his other companies affiliated with it, have [received at least five minister's](#) zoning orders (MZOs) to fast-track development. Multiple of these are for projects near land Rehmatullah owns through Flato Upper Markham Village Inc. that was under Greenbelt protections until last year.

[Some of this 102-acre plot](#) in Markham was freed up for development by the Ford government in one of the 15 parcels it lifted development-restricting protections from in its Greenbelt land swap. Flato bought this plot for \$15 million in 2017.

In removing land from the Greenbelt last year, Ford broke the promise [he made in 2018](#) to not "touch the Greenbelt."

The Ford government's justification for removing 7,400 total acres from the Greenbelt last year is so 50,000 homes can be built on them to contribute toward the government's goal of having 1.5 million new homes built in Ontario by 2031.

Rasheed's spokesperson said the minister has "an ethics screen on any government decisions related to Mr. Rehmatullah and his companies."

Typically, an "ethics screen" is a set of procedures established for someone in the government, such as a cabinet minister, to keep them out of dealings that could impact the business of a spouse, family member, or close friend.

Massoudi said that while he was working in the government, he wasn't directly involved in decisions benefiting Rehmatullah.

"During my time in government I had no direct role in decisions to issue specific MZOs," Massoudi said in an email. "To my knowledge, decisions on specific changes to the Greenbelt were made after my departure from government."

As Ford's principal secretary, Massoudi was the most senior premier's office staffer responsible for managing stakeholders. He frequently met with individuals and companies interested in a broad range of government business, his daily calendars from when he worked in the premier's office, which *The Trillium* obtained via freedom-of-information requests, show.

In Ford's political career, Massoudi was one of his closest, most loyal, and longest-serving aides. By the time Massoudi left the provincial government late last summer, he had worked in roles close to the premier for more than six-and-a-half of the just over eight years that Ford had held elected office, dating back to when they shared time at Toronto city hall.

Rasheed was given his first ministerial appointment by Ford on June 18, 2021, when Ford named him associate minister of digital government. After being re-elected in spring 2022, Rasheed was appointed minister of public and business service delivery on June 24, 2022.

Massoudi, Rehmatullah and Rasheed are all friends, multiple sources told *The Trillium*. Rasheed called Rehmatullah [his "dear friend"](#) when introducing him in the legislative chamber in 2018. Neither Massoudi nor Rasheed's spokesperson denied the three of them being friends when asked.

Ontario's integrity commissioner's spokesperson wouldn't say whether Massoudi or Rasheed reported a Las Vegas trip to their office, or if Rasheed had sought an official opinion from the commissioner about the appropriateness of a trip, as MPPs can do. The integrity commissioner's office's operations are shaped by five different laws that significantly limit how much it can disclose about its work.

Massoudi's last day working in the provincial government was last Aug. 26, according to a post he made [on LinkedIn](#).

Corporate records from May 2023 show him as the sole director of his lobbying business Atlas Strategic Advisors Inc.

[On June 13](#), Massoudi confirmed to *The Trillium* that the integrity commissioner was "looking into a matter involving" Atlas after the commissioner's office's spokesperson confirmed it had "received information about Amin Massoudi and potential non-compliance with the (Lobbyists Registration) Act." Massoudi also denied any wrongdoing by his lobbying firm. "At Atlas, we know and obey the important rules placed on lobbyists. Any suggestion to the contrary is false," Massoudi added in an email.

On Wednesday, about an hour after Massoudi responded in an email to some of the questions posed to him ahead of this story's publication, a lawyer with Henein Hutchison Robitaille LLP emailed *The Trillium* about its questioning of government officials and Atlas' clients and potential clients when preparing the June 13 story.

The lawyer wrote that Massoudi and his firm are prepared to use "all of the usual legal remedies available" against the publication and journalist reporting the story.

"You are therefore directed to cease making statements, allegations or by innuendo falsely suggesting that Mr. Massoudi has engaged in any legal or ethical breach in the course of his work either during or after his time in public service," the lawyer wrote.

No one, including Massoudi or his lawyer, has directly disputed anything reported in the June 13 story. *The Trillium* also has not been asked to correct or change anything in that story and stands by its reporting.