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Archived - 2014 Mandate letter: Children and Youth Services

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities for the year 2014



September 25, 2014

The Honourable Tracy MacCharles
Minister of Children and Youth Services
Ministry of Children and Youth Services
14th Floor, 56 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Minister MacCharles:

I am honoured to welcome you to your role as Minister of Children and Youth Services. We have a strong Cabinet in place, and I am confident that together we will build Ontario up, create new opportunities and champion a secure future for people across our province. The people of Ontario have entrusted their government to be a force for good, and we will reward that trust by working every day in the best interests of every person in this province.

As we implement a balanced and comprehensive plan for Ontario, we will lead from the activist centre. We will place emphasis on partnerships with businesses, communities and people to help foster continued economic growth and make a positive impact on the lives of every Ontarian. This collaborative approach will shape all the

work we do. It will ensure we engage people on the issues that matter the most to them, and that we implement meaningful solutions to our shared challenges.

Our government's most recent Speech from the Throne outlined a number of key priorities that will guide your work as minister. Growing the economy and helping to create good jobs are fundamental to building more opportunity and security, now and in the future. That critical priority is supported by strategic investments in the talent and skills of our people, from childhood to retirement. It is supported through the building of modern infrastructure, transit and a seamless transportation network. It is supported by a dynamic business climate that thrives on innovation, creativity and partnerships to foster greater prosperity. And it is reflected across all of our government, in every area, and will extensively inform our programs and policies.

As we move forward with our plan to grow the economy and create jobs, we will do so through the lens of fiscal prudence. Our 2014 Budget reinforces our commitment to balancing the budget by 2017-18; it is essential that every area adheres to the program-spending objectives established in it. We will choose to invest wisely in initiatives that strengthen Ontario's competitive advantage, create jobs and provide vital public services to our families. The President of the Treasury Board, collaborating with the Minister of Finance, will work closely with you and your fellow Cabinet members to ensure that our government meets its fiscal targets. The President of the Treasury Board will also lead the government's efforts on accountability, openness and modernization as we implement new accountability measures across government.

As Minister of Children and Youth Services, you will play a key role in ensuring that every child in Ontario has the best possible start in life. Your priority will be to work with your ministerial colleagues, so that every child and young person in Ontario has access to the right supports and opportunities needed to make positive choices, reach their full potential and seamlessly transition to adulthood.

In doing so, you will work within your ministry and with your colleagues to make sure the government's child and youth programming is integrated and co-ordinated so as to provide a seamless continuum of service to young people and their families.

Your ministry's specific priorities include:

Transforming the Child Welfare System

- Continuing to work with children's aid societies to lead the ongoing transformation of the child welfare system that helps improve opportunities and outcomes for children, and has the confidence of Ontario families and communities. You will work with community partners to help children in Ontario grow up healthy, happy and safe — and prepared to transition into adulthood and independence successfully and with confidence.

Providing Opportunities for At-Risk Youth

- Co-ordinating collaborative cross-government actions that support young people in successfully transitioning to adulthood by supporting a co-ordinated range of community programs and services that are responsive to the strengths and needs of at-risk youth — including racialized youth, newcomer youth, Aboriginal youth, youth living in care, youth with mental health and addiction needs, and children and youth with special needs. Through *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed*, you will continue to review and assess the effectiveness of current youth programs to ensure that the programs are maximizing positive outcomes for youth.
- Supporting the availability of opportunities for Ontario's youth by building on the successes of the Youth Action Plan and supporting communities that are addressing the root causes of violence.
- Championing our collective efforts to address the root causes of youth alienation and violence by ensuring that we provide the right combination of supports and opportunities to make certain our youth have hope for the future. You will work with the ministers of the Attorney General and Community Safety and

Correctional Services to take action to protect young people in their homes and communities from all forms of violence — including that which arises from the prevalence of handguns in our urban communities.

- Continuing to support the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities to engage with youth, young professionals and community partners to provide advice to government to ensure that young people across the province have a voice in the services and supports they need to help them succeed.

Building Strong Relationships with our Aboriginal Partners

- Ensuring that First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Urban Aboriginal perspectives and cultures are considered as you develop programs and policies for children and youth.
- Continuing to build stronger relationships and work with our First Nation, Inuit, Métis and Urban Aboriginal partners to improve opportunities and outcomes for children, youth and their families living in these communities.
- Leading the launch and implementation of an Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy to build community-driven, integrated and culturally appropriate services — including mental health and wellness, suicide prevention and life promotion, child welfare, early childhood supports, specialized services, rehabilitation services and youth justice services.

Promoting the Mental Health and Well-Being of Ontario's Children and Youth

- Sustaining the accomplishments of the first three years of Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. You will also work with your partner ministers of Health and Long-Term Care, of Education, and of Training, Colleges and Universities to focus on monitoring the progress of Ontario's comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.
- Continuing to transform the mental health system so children and youth — and their families — know where to go to receive services, regardless of where they live.
- Implementing a provincewide Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative and continuing to reach underserved communities to improve access to mental health supports, including culturally appropriate programs and services for First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Urban Aboriginal children and youth.
- Collaborating with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in exploring options on how to improve addictions programming for children and youth, based on evidence, as part of our government's commitment to create healthy, resilient and inclusive communities.

Supporting Children and Youth with Complex and Special Needs

- Focusing on developing and implementing strategies that will improve the experience and outcomes for children and youth with complex and special needs, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- Continuing to work with the ministers of Education, of Health and Long-Term Care, and of Community and Social Services — and with families, youth and experts — to implement Ontario's Special Needs Strategy. The strategy will address long-standing challenges facing families and service providers in the special needs community, including accessing information, navigating services and transitioning to adult services.
- Developing and implementing initiatives focused on early identification, early intervention and responsive programs and services for families of children and youth with special needs.

Building on Youth's Talent and Skills

- Continuing to support the Ontario Youth Jobs Strategy — working with the ministers of Training, Colleges and Universities, and of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure — to do more to help youth connect with employers and get job placements that provide valuable experiences that develop talent and skills.
- Collaborating with ministerial colleagues to support the integration of employment and training programs to optimize access to, and awareness of, our government’s youth employment programs, while recognizing the unique challenges faced by diverse and at-risk youth.
- Reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of current funding that aims to help youth gain the necessary skills and experience to obtain stable employment. You will ensure that the review includes exploring options on how to sustain positive outcomes for youth employment.

Reducing Poverty

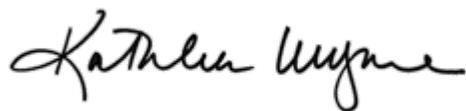
- Supporting the Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy in implementing a new Poverty Reduction Strategy. I ask that you build on the gains made under the first five years of the current strategy, and that you focus on initiatives that mitigate the effects of poverty for children and youth — and that reduce child poverty in our province.

We have an ambitious agenda for the next four years. I know that, by working together in partnership, we can be successful. The above list of priority initiatives is not meant to be exhaustive, as there are many other responsibilities that you and your ministry will need to carry out. To that end, this mandate letter is to be used by your ministry to develop more detailed plans for implementation of the initiatives above, in addition to other initiatives not highlighted in this letter.

I ask that you continue to build on the strong relationships we have with the Ontario Public Service, the broader public sector, other levels of government, and the private, non-profit and voluntary sectors. We want to be the most open and transparent government in the country. We want to be a government that works for the people of this province — and with them. It is of the utmost importance that we lead responsibly, act with integrity, manage spending wisely and are accountable for every action we take.

I look forward to working together with you in building opportunity today, and securing the future for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Wynne
Premier

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