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Archived - 2014 Mandate letter: Education

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



September 25, 2014

The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Sandals:

I am honoured to welcome you back to your role as Minister of Education. 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 Education, your top priority will be implementing *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*. This plan will take public education in Ontario from great to excellent by continually improving learning, so that young people have the talent and skills they need — and are prepared to lead in the global economy.

Ontario's publicly funded education system is acknowledged as one of the best in the world. I ask that you build on this solid foundation and continue to progress toward a responsive, high-quality and accessible system that is integrated from early learning and child care through to adult education.

By 2025, Ontario will have an education system that seamlessly integrates services from early years to adulthood. Ontario will be a world leader in higher-order skills — such as critical thinking and problem solving — which will allow Ontario to thrive in the increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Your ministry's specific priorities include:

Moving Forward on Child Care and the Early Years

- Building on the successful implementation of full-day kindergarten, which will be fully implemented this year. As outlined below, you will continue to work with school boards, municipalities, First Nations, child care operators and parents to modernize, stabilize and strengthen the child care system and improve oversight.
- Overseeing the implementation of legislative and regulatory changes through the Child Care Modernization Act, 2014, if passed.
- Creating Best Start Child and Family Centres by integrating and transforming existing family support programs.
- Ensuring that children have the opportunity to benefit from the continued integration of child care, early years and the education system.
- Working with the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport to develop options to support the implementation of high-quality before- and after- school programming for 6 to 12 year-olds through school boards or a third party.

Implementing the Renewed Vision for Education

- Working with our education sector partners to, as detailed below, achieve the four renewed goals for education in Ontario outlined in *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*. This will require taking evidence-based actions informed by broad collaboration. Your plan will result in a

high-performing education system with engaged educators, supportive staff, and administrative and other professionals who are committed to continuous learning.

Achieving Excellence

- Working to ensure that students graduating from high school are ready to meet the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow's economy and society. Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship.
- Supporting educators in learning so they will be recognized as among the best in the world. You will lead efforts to modernize and expand teacher education into a two-year program, starting in September 2015. The modernized program will include mandatory content that will better prepare teachers for the classrooms of today and tomorrow. That content would include topics such as: using technology in the classroom, literacy and numeracy, mental health and addictions, safe schools, First Nation, Métis and Inuit education and special education.
- Continuing to measure progress toward an 85 per cent five-year high school graduation rate and a 75 per cent success rate on elementary Education Quality and Accountability Office assessments — with a particular focus on mathematics. These results will continue to be reported publicly to ensure transparency and accountability within the education system.
- Supporting progress toward the above goals by investing \$150 million over three years in technology and learning tools such as new digital tablets, netbooks, cameras, software and professional development for teachers. You will also look at new and innovative ways to increase support that improves student performance in math, science and technology, such as new supports and resources for the classroom. These will include new learning opportunities in mathematics for educators, and supporting access to TVO's Homework Help, which provides students with free, real-time math tutoring by certified Ontario teachers.

Ensuring Equity

- Inspiring all children and students to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- Continuing to focus on closing achievement gaps for those groups that are at higher risk of not succeeding in school — including Aboriginal students, children and youth in care, students with special education needs and students new to Canada.
- Ensuring equity by supporting students through transition periods that we know pose challenges: when students enter kindergarten; when they make the transition to Grade 1; when they move from elementary to secondary school; when they move from secondary school to postsecondary education or the world of work; and when they move between schools or communities.
- Supporting students through transitions unique to each student's circumstances. For example, a youth in care may be transitioning between parents or guardians, and may be changing schools at the same time. Some Aboriginal students may be transitioning from on-reserve schools to the provincial school system. You will recognize these challenging transitions and work collaboratively — both within the education system and with broader public sector partners — to ensure that all students, regardless of circumstances, can be successful and supported.
- Working with the ministers of Training, Colleges and Universities, and of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade to ensure the adult education system better supports adult learners in their efforts to finish high school, and successfully transition to postsecondary education, training or the work place.

Promoting Well-Being

- Ensuring that all children and students develop enhanced mental and physical health and a positive sense of self and belonging. Building on your work to promote equitable, inclusive and accepting school climates.

- Working with partner ministries to support a long-term goal for children and youth to have access to 60 minutes of activity connected to their school day, and for students to learn from an up-to-date health and physical education curriculum.

Enhancing Public Confidence

- Ensuring that Ontarians continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.
- Working with school boards to better prepare students for the workforce by providing Grade 7 to 12 students with access to their own online career planning tool and adjusting the current Grade 10 Careers curriculum. The new tool will help students explore potential careers in a more hands-on way — and support all teachers, including guidance counsellors, to better prepare students for future careers.
- Working with schools, school boards, guidance counsellors, and business and labour in communities to increase experiential learning opportunities and to identify people who can mentor students throughout school toward apprenticeship and successful careers.
- Complementing the above initiatives by introducing a new Experience Ontario program to support paid community work and service. This program will be led by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who will also improve the availability of labour market information to help government, institutions, students, families and employers make important decisions about education, training and hiring. Your goal is to build on the success of existing programs to help students leave secondary school with a clear path for their initial postsecondary destination — be it apprenticeship training, college, Experience Ontario, university or the workplace.

Respecting Collective Bargaining

- Continuing to respect the collective bargaining process, as demonstrated by our introduction and passage of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. Collective bargaining enhances the ability of responsible employers and bargaining agents to increase productivity, deliver services and ensure fiscal sustainability. Any modest wage increases that may be negotiated must be absorbed by employers within Ontario's existing fiscal plan.

Investing in School Infrastructure

- Providing over the next ten years more than \$11 billion in capital grants to school boards to continue building better places to learn and to support school consolidations, including joint use projects.

Developing a Community Hubs Policy

- Using some empty school space across the province for community resources — or community hubs — that could be supported by creative partnerships. You will work with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and others to consult with stakeholders and develop a policy that supports the development of community hubs. This policy should consider the amount, location, value and nature of excess space in the education system that could be used for novel purposes. You will also work with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to consider how to improve interactions between school boards and municipalities to ensure effective land-use planning.

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, 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, 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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