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Archived - 2014 Mandate letter: Environment and Climate Change

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



September 25, 2014

The Honourable Glen Murray
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
77 Wellesley Street West
11th Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2T5

Dear Minister Murray:

I am honoured to welcome you to your role as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. 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 the Environment and Climate Change, you will continue to focus your attention on ensuring clean air, water and land. You will also work with industry, stakeholders and the public to achieve compliance with environmental standards and you will establish a new long-term climate change strategy.

Your ministry's specific priorities include:

Moving Forward on Climate Change

- Building on, and supporting, the most current science, lead the development of a new long term climate change strategy for Ontario. This strategy will be forward looking to 2050 and will contain an action plan to help our government achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2020. Implementing the strategy and achieving our targets will require an all-of-government approach and, as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, you will work with and be supported by colleagues, including the ministers of Finance, Energy, Transportation, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Research and Innovation, and Natural Resources and Forestry to complete the strategy in 2015.
- Developing initiatives to engage the broader public and stakeholders in a discussion about climate change and its risks.
- Supporting the Secretary of the Cabinet and the President of the Treasury Board to ensure climate change is taken into account in the government decision-making process. This will include greenhouse gas (GHG) impact analyses for significant policies, legislation and regulations and adaptation considerations for public infrastructure investments.
- Supporting the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the Minister of Energy, and working with other provinces and territories, on the development of a Canadian Energy Strategy that includes co-ordinated efforts to reduce GHG emissions.
- Developing new alternative fuel rules in 2014 to help big, energy-intensive industries reduce their GHG emissions.

Protecting the Great Lakes

- Re-introducing a strengthened Great Lakes Protection Act, which recognizes the importance of the Great Lakes to Ontario's environment, economy and the health of our citizens.

- Further protecting the Great Lakes, including making Great Lakes shorelines and beaches cleaner and safer, through steps outlined below.
- Negotiating the renewal of, and implementing, the Canada-Ontario Agreement respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. This will include developing a nutrient target by 2016 to address algal blooms in the Great Lakes and bringing forward recommendations to meet that target.
- Continuing to engage local communities in clean-up and restoration efforts, including through the Great Lakes Guardian Fund.
- Working with Great Lakes states to ensure the sustainability of the Great Lakes. This will include fully implementing the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement by regulating intra-basin transfers.

Increasing Waste Diversion

- Developing and implementing improved approaches to waste diversion. Your ministry will do so by building on the release of the Waste Reduction Strategy and working with industry, municipalities and other stakeholders toward the objective of re-introducing waste reduction legislation. The goal for your ministry is to ensure the ongoing sustainability and appropriate governance of waste diversion programs. This is critical to protecting the environment, recovering economic value in the waste stream and reaping GHG reduction benefits by using resources more efficiently.

Improving Drinking Water for First Nations

- Improving drinking water on reserves, with a focus on remote communities: the number of First Nation reserves without access to safe drinking water is unacceptable. You will work with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, me — in my capacity as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs — and the federal government, who are primarily responsible for the provision of safe drinking water on reserves, to make substantive progress in this area. We will develop measurable, achievable targets to monitor progress.

Improving Pollinator Health

- Supporting the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in efforts to strengthen pollinator health.

Safeguarding People from Toxics

- Working with business, industry and partner ministers to provide Ontarians with better information about chemicals linked with cancer.
- Working with industry, ensure that products on Ontario store shelves such as children's products are as safe as those in the US and the European Union.

Supporting the Development of the Ring of Fire

- Continuing to work on decisions relating to environmental assessments associated with projects in the Ring of Fire region. You will do so by working with the ministers of Northern Development and Mines, Aboriginal Affairs, and Natural Resources and Forestry. This will include ensuring that the regional and cumulative impacts of proposed development are considered.

Enhancing Polluter Responsibility

- Reviewing the legislative framework to ensure there is a comprehensive approach to holding polluters responsible for decisions that affect the environment. Your ministry will put greater emphasis on

prevention and on the “polluter pays” principle, focusing initially on contaminated sites.

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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