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Archived - 2014 Mandate letter: Municipal Affairs and Housing

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



September 25, 2014

The Honourable Ted McMeekin
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2E5

Dear Minister McMeekin:

I am honoured to welcome you to your role as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. 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 the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, you will strengthen and support communities across the province. You will work to improve affordable housing and land use planning, protect the environment and agricultural lands, strengthen partnerships with municipal governments, and review provincial policies relating to disaster relief and building codes to ensure that Ontario's communities are safe, connected and able to thrive.

Your ministry's specific priorities include:

Moving Forward on Social and Affordable Housing

- Working to implement the renewed five-year agreement with the federal government on the Investment in Affordable Housing program. As part of this investment, you will improve the availability of suitable, affordable housing for seniors and collaborate with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) to expand supportive housing opportunities for people with mental health and addictions issues.
- Continuing to work collaboratively with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, other provinces, territories and municipal partners to call on our federal partners to commit to long-term funding for social and affordable housing.
- Undertaking a review of the Long-term Affordable Housing Strategy by 2015-16 to support Realizing Our Potential, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy. You will conduct this review, in collaboration with the Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Minister of Community and Social Services, MOHLTC and other relevant ministers. This work will include examining the methods available to measure housing needs and related metrics, and ensuring that the strategy reflects current research and best practices and our goal to end homelessness.

Improving Land Use Planning

- Undertaking initiatives, as the lead minister for Ontario's one-window land use planning system, that will balance the need to support economic growth, protect the environment and improve the province's social well-being.
- Supporting the development of sustainable, transit-friendly complete communities by amending the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act to improve land use planning and encourage smarter growth, with these amendments ensuring respect for local official plans and decision-making, generating

more growth-related revenue for transit, requiring that citizen input is considered in the land use planning process and having the effect of reducing the number of applications to the Ontario Municipal Board.

- Leading a review of the scope and effectiveness of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). Working with the Attorney General and key stakeholders, you will recommend possible reforms that would improve the OMB's role within the broader land use planning system.

Reviewing Provincial Growth and Greenbelt Plans

- Leading the co-ordinated review of the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plans, working closely with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Minister of Transportation and relevant stakeholders. Your goals are to improve alignment across provincial plans and transit investments, and to support planning and development decisions that will create more complete communities across the province, providing options for healthier living and shorter commute times for Ontarians.
- Working to protect prime agricultural lands. You will do so as part of the co-ordinated reviews of provincial land use plans, working with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and in consultation with farmers, municipalities, stakeholders and the public.
- Finalizing the indicators for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and for the Greenbelt Plans to assess the results of the plans' implementation and develop reports to monitor progress toward more complete communities and the achievement of the plans' goals.
- Partnering with municipalities to grow the Greenbelt. You will respond to municipal requests in a timely manner ensuring there is a clear, simple process in place to address requests for further expansion.

Reviewing Municipal Governance

- Undertaking a review of the Municipal Elections Act after the 2014 municipal elections. You will ensure that the act meets the needs of communities, and that it provides municipalities with the option of using ranked ballots in future elections, starting in 2018, as an alternative to first-past-the-post.

Strengthening Partnerships with Municipalities

- Continuing to apply a municipal lens to decisions made across government, ensuring the impact on municipalities is carefully considered.
- Continuing to facilitate the strong relationship between the province and municipalities, including the ongoing implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), as well as the Toronto-Ontario Cooperation and Consultation Agreement. You will consult with AMO and Toronto on matters of mutual interest.
- Working with municipalities outside of these formal agreements to ensure their perspectives are also heard.

Amending the Building Code

- Reviewing the Building Code to continue to ensure buildings are safe, accessible and cost-effective. You will focus on moving Ontario forward as the North American leader in climate-resistant and environmentally efficient construction.
- Amending the Building Code to allow six-storey, wood-frame buildings, which will encourage the construction of mid-rise, mixed-use buildings.
- Considering and implementing, where appropriate, recommendations from the Elliot Lake Public Inquiry, including changes to legislation, regulation, bylaws, policies and procedures that may prevent a similar event in the future.

Reviewing Disaster Response

- Undertaking a review of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program. Your goals are to ensure the program design and criteria reflect current needs in addressing extreme weather events and build upon lessons learned from recent experiences, such as the 2013 ice storm. You will do so in alignment with the comprehensive review of the province's emergency management system by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Developing a Community Hubs Policy

- Working with the ministers of Health and Long-Term Care, Education, and others, to consult with stakeholders and develop clear government policy on community hubs. This policy will promote efficient use of public assets and build better ties among schools, municipalities and community organizations.

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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