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Archived - 2014 Mandate letter: Aboriginal Affairs

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



September 25, 2014

The Honourable David Zimmer
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs
160 Bloor Street East
Fourth Floor, Suite 400
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2E6

Dear Minister Zimmer:

I am honoured to welcome you back to your role as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. 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 Aboriginal Affairs responsible for leading strategic Aboriginal policy for Ontario, you will continue to lead cross-government initiatives that strengthen relationships with Aboriginal communities and improve outcomes for Aboriginal peoples — and, in turn, for all Ontarians. To advance this work, you will develop options to increase Aboriginal voices in decision-making across government and further Ontario's efforts to build constructive, co-operative relationships with Aboriginal peoples.

Your ministry's specific priorities include:

Improving Aboriginal Outcomes

- Improving opportunities for meaningful employment and business development. You will do this by creating the Aboriginal Economic Development Fund for Aboriginal communities and businesses.
- Improving socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal peoples living in urban communities by creating the Urban Aboriginal Action Plan.
- Supporting the Minister of Education's work to improve educational outcomes, closing achievement gaps and significantly increasing graduation rates for Aboriginal learners.
- Continuing to work with the Ontario Women's Directorate to develop a long-term strategy to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls.
- Working with the Minister of Energy and the federal government to ensure that remote First Nation communities are positioned to benefit from remote transmission projects by creating the Remote Electrification Readiness Program.

Sharing Resource Benefits

- Continuing to work across government to ensure that Aboriginal peoples share in the benefits of natural resources and are engaged in resource-related economic development. You will do this by advancing the province's local/sectoral approach to resource benefits sharing.

Collaborating on Ring of Fire Negotiations

- Working with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and with First Nation communities on the next phase of negotiations under the Ring of Fire Framework Agreement our government signed earlier this year. Your goal is to ensure benefits sharing and a regional approach that respects community-based planning.

Moving Forward on Land Claims, Treaties and Consultation

- Continuing to resolve land claims in a timely manner, concluding the Agreement-in-Principle on the Algonquin land claim, developing a draft Algonquin treaty for public consultation and continuing to encourage the federal government to make progress on outstanding land issues.
- Moving forward with a new Treaty Strategy that will promote constructive engagement with First Nation communities, revitalize treaty relationships and promote improved socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal peoples. You will also develop an education and awareness campaign to increase public awareness, understanding and recognition of treaties and treaty rights.
- Working with ministers to ensure that Ontario continues to meet its duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Aboriginal communities.

Improving Drinking Water for First Nations

- Improving drinking water on reserves, with a focus on remote communities. You will work with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the federal government to make substantive progress in providing First Nation reserves with access to safe drinking water. The ministers will work toward developing measurable, achievable targets to monitor progress.

Engaging in Dialogue with the Federal Government

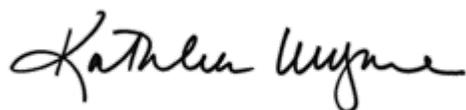
- Engaging in dialogue with the federal government on key priorities and issues for Aboriginal peoples. This will include advocating for more sustainable funding for education, taking further action to address socio-economic disparities for First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities — and addressing the funding implications of increasing Aboriginal control in program and service delivery.
- Supporting the National Aboriginal Organizations' call to the federal government to hold a national public inquiry on murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls. Work with the Assembly of First Nations and Native Women's Association of Canada towards a national roundtable discussion with federal and provincial ministers on murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls.

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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