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## Archived - 2014 Mandate letter: Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

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



September 25, 2014

The Honourable Jeff Leal  
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor, 77 Grenville Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1B3

Dear Minister Leal:

I am honoured to welcome you to your role as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural 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 Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, you will continue to support the growth of the agri-food sector, ensure the sustainability of agriculture and help develop rural economies.

Your ministry's specific priorities include:

## **Supporting the Growth of the Agri-Food Sector**

- Identifying and acting upon opportunities to support the food processing industry and help farmers enhance their operations, including through the Food Industry Program under the Jobs and Prosperity Fund. I ask that you support the Premier's Agri-Food Challenge, which calls on the province's agri-food industry to double its growth rate and create 120,000 jobs by the year 2020.
- Promoting, encouraging and investing in innovative local food projects that celebrate the rich diversity of foods produced and made in Ontario, and which feed local economies and help communities grow.
- Working with industry and partners to address how the ministry can more effectively support clients as they deal with regulatory burdens.

## **Ensuring Sustainability of Agriculture**

- Creating and implementing the new Farms Forever Program. The program will help preserve the productive capacity of agricultural land close to major urban centres, support the local sourcing of food, strengthen Ontario's agri-food sector and support young farmers.
- Continuing to work with partner ministers and the agricultural sector to decrease nutrient run-off, reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and make our agricultural sector as resilient as possible to climate change.
- Strengthening pollinator health. You will work with other ministers and stakeholders to develop a Pollinator Health Strategy for Ontario that includes sustainable, long-term initiatives aimed at improving the health of bees and other pollinators.
- Working with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, other ministers, industry partners and stakeholders, develop an action plan to meaningfully reduce neonicotinoid use for the 2015 growing season, including measurable targets. I also ask that you develop a system that requires a reduction in the use of seeds treated with neonicotinoid insecticides for the 2016 growing season through regulatory mechanisms, permitting or further measures as needed.

## Providing Business Supports to Farmers

- Continuing to work with the federal government to implement the Growing Forward 2 initiative and develop Growing Forward 3, the latter calling for predictable, bankable and stable future national business risk management programs.
- Continuing to support supply management in the province, which helps maintain a stable, quality supply of products for Ontario's processors and consumers.
- Amending the *Crop Insurance Act* to enable the province to offer insurance for a broader range of agricultural products, such as bees and livestock. You will also work with the agricultural sector to identify and develop new insurance plans.

## Expanding Agriculture in the North

- Working with other ministers and partners to explore opportunities to develop the agricultural sector in the North. This approach should prioritize opportunities on private land.

## Fostering Vibrant Rural Economies

- Working with ministers and partners to continue to engage with rural stakeholders, deliver effective programs — such as the Rural Economic Development Program — and services to rural areas, and move forward with the Rural Roadmap.
- Continuing to work with other ministers to support the growth of manufacturing and the digital economy in rural Ontario.
- Supporting the work of the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and the Minister of Energy to establish and implement natural gas initiatives. The programs will be funded under our \$130-billion infrastructure plan and will give consumers in underserved communities more energy choices, make commercial transportation more affordable, attract new industry to Ontario, and benefit our agricultural producers. Your goal is to help ensure that Ontario residents and industries are able to share in affordable supplies of natural gas.
- Continuing to work with other ministers and partners to support a sustainable, customer-responsive horse-racing industry that supports jobs and local economies; and to integrate horse racing within the broader Ontario gaming strategy.

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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