



This page was published under a previous government and is available for archival and research purposes.

Archived - September 2016 Mandate letter: Education

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities.



September 23, 2016

The Honourable Mitzie Hunter
Minister of Education
900 Bay Street
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Hunter:

Welcome to your role as Minister of Education. As we mark the mid-point of our mandate, we have a strong and new Cabinet, and are poised to redouble our efforts to deliver on our top priority — creating jobs and growth. Guided by our balanced plan to build Ontario up for everyone, we will continue to work together to deliver real benefits and more inclusive growth that will help people in their everyday lives.

We embark on this important part of our mandate knowing that our four-part economic plan is working — we are making the largest investment in public infrastructure in Ontario's history, making postsecondary education more affordable and accessible, leading the transition to a low-carbon economy and the fight against climate change, and building retirement security for workers.

Building on our ambitious and activist agenda, and with a focus on implementing our economic plan, we will continue to forge partnerships with businesses, educators, labour, communities, the not-for-profit sector and with

all Ontarians to foster economic growth and to make a genuine, positive difference in people's lives. Collaboration and active listening remain at the heart of the work we undertake on behalf of the people of Ontario — these are values that ensure a common purpose, stimulate positive change and help achieve desired outcomes. With this in mind, I ask that you work closely with your Cabinet colleagues to deliver positive results on initiatives that cut across several ministries, such as our Climate Change Action Plan, Business Growth Initiative, and the Highly Skilled Workforce Strategy. I also ask you to collaborate with the Minister Responsible for Digital Government to drive digital transformation across government and modernize public service delivery.

We have made tangible progress and we have achieved the following key results:

- Reached our goal of 85 per cent graduation rate for Ontario high school students — 85.5 per cent in 2015, which is the highest level in the province's history and up from 68 per cent in 2004.
- Invested more than \$60 million in a renewed math strategy to help support students across the province achieve better results in mathematics.
- Committed to working with Indigenous partners to ensure that the impact of residential schools, the history of colonization and the importance of treaties are incorporated into mandatory learning expectations in Ontario's public education system curriculum.
- Provided funding to school boards to establish a position dedicated to support First Nation, Métis and Inuit education initiatives.
- Concluded the first round of education sector central collective bargaining under the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act* with the successful negotiation of nine central labour agreements. Agreements were also recently reached with principals and vice-principals.
- Implemented the enhanced teacher two-year education program in September 2015, which is better preparing teachers for the classrooms of today and tomorrow.
- Helped more students make the transition between secondary and postsecondary education and training with Experience Ontario, a pilot program launched in 2015 designed to help young people identify and work towards their future goals.
- Made full-day kindergarten available to every four- and five-year-old in Ontario since September 2014.
- Since 2003-04, doubled child care funding to more than \$1 billion annually and increased the number of licensed child care spaces in Ontario to nearly 351,000 — an increase of 87 per cent.
- Modernized child care and early years legislation, which came into effect August 31, 2015, supported by new regulations.
- Implemented regulations to support before- and after-school programs for 4- to 12-year-olds, where there is demand at schools serving children from JK_K – Grade 6, effective September 1, 2017.
- Introduced regulatory changes to end fees for child care wait lists.
- Launched a plan to create Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres to make access to child and family programs easier.
- Announced nearly \$90 million dollars to support community hubs to expand child care and child and family support services in local schools and improve community access to school space.
- Announced a \$1.1 billion investment over two years to repair and renew schools across the province including roofs, electrical and plumbing systems, flooring, walls, ceilings, and playing fields so that they continue to be safe and modern places for students to learn. This investment is part of the government's broader capital investment in schools. The province is providing school boards with more than \$12 billion over 10 years to help build new schools in areas of high growth, improve the condition of existing schools and support school consolidations.

As Minister of Education, you will be responsible for the province's early years, elementary, and secondary system, with a focus on supporting the full continuum of learning in partnership with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development — from the early years to postsecondary education and lifelong learning system — that puts the learner and student at the centre. Your mandate is to work collaboratively across government and with education and early years partners to:

Collaborate with the Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) to Create More Accessible, Affordable, High-Quality Early Years and Child Care Programs for Families

- Building on work to date, work in partnership with the Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) to develop a plan to build a high-quality, accessible and affordable early years and child care system that supports parent choice and flexibility and promotes healthy development. As part of this work, continue to support expanded capacity in child care to support parent choice and flexibility regarding child care options, with a goal of increasing the number of licensed spaces by 100,000 within five years, starting in 2017.

Continue to Implement the Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario

Achieving Excellence

- Continue work with school boards and educators to implement key elements of Ontario's renewed math strategy starting in September 2016, including math lead teachers and a minimum of 60 minutes each day of protected learning time for math in every elementary school. Work with school boards, experts, principals, teachers and the Curriculum Council to ensure that educators have access to the supports they need to teach a curriculum that achieves a balance of understanding basic math concepts, gaining arithmetic skills, and developing thinking skills for advanced problem solving.
- Complementing Ontario's math strategy, develop a strategy to provide students with exposure and access to the science, engineering and technology fields that considers opportunities for computer coding.
- Work to close the achievement gap and improve graduation rates for underrepresented groups of students such as Indigenous students, children and youth in care, students living in poverty, and students with special education needs.
- Enhance civic engagement opportunities in schools, including through updates to the civics curriculum for students, student and school participation in initiatives such as Student Vote, and promotion of provisional registration of 16 and 17 year olds who would be eligible to vote upon reaching their eighteenth birthday.

Ensuring Equity

- Supporting the government's commitment to reconciliation, work with Indigenous partners to support mandatory learning about residential schools, build capacity in and better support transitions from First Nations schools, support Indigenous child care and family programs, close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and support Indigenous languages.
- In close partnership with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and with advice from the Minister of Children and Youth Services, postsecondary institutions, education leaders, students, parents and researchers, develop an access strategy to address the non-financial barriers to postsecondary education for underrepresented groups, including Indigenous students, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students.
- Develop a strategy to improve supports for children with special education needs in schools. The strategy should look at ways to improve school-based supports for students with autism spectrum disorder. The strategy should also complement Ontario's Special Needs Strategy to help families access the supports they need at home, at school, and in their communities.
- Collaborate with partners on strengthening data collection, performance measurement, evaluation and public reporting on education in Ontario. As part of this work, continue to partner with York University on a feasibility study into collecting additional provincewide data, such as students' race or parental education, to further inform understanding of student populations and school communities and address the needs of students. This work should be aligned with the work of the Anti-Racism Directorate and other government partners.

Promoting Well-Being

- Engage with partners on Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education, including steps to establish a common understanding of what promoting well-being means in schools and to develop ways to measure progress in promoting child, student and staff well-being.
- Lead the government's work to advance the goal for children and youth to have access to 60 minutes of activity connected to their school day, working with partner ministries. A key part of implementing this goal is your ministry's work to ensure that elementary students have a minimum of 20 minutes of physical activity each school day.
- Promote the value of arts, including the visual and performing arts, in developing critical and creative thinking skills that support students' well-being and success in school and in life.

Enhancing Public Confidence

- Support the learning and teaching requirements of the 21st century by helping Ontario's publicly funded school boards gain equitable and affordable access to high-speed broadband services.
- Complete the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act* review.
- Work with the Ontario College of Teachers and College of Early Childhood Educators to implement changes as part of the Protecting Students Act, if passed, to protect children and students by making the disciplinary process for the province's educators more clear and transparent.

Build Ontario's Highly Skilled Workforce for the Modern Economy

- Support the implementation of the recommendations of the Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, working with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, including:
 - Developing a learner-focused Adult Education System.
 - Enhancing experiential learning opportunities for students linked to or beyond the curriculum. As part of this work, continue to strengthen the Experience Ontario program to better meet the needs of participants and employer partners, advance the goal of at least one experiential learning opportunity for every student by graduation, and expand the participation rate of grade 11 and 12 students in the Specialist High Skills Majors Program by 10 per cent.
 - Developing a modernized apprenticeship system focused on increasing completion rates, increasing the participation of traditionally under-represented groups, and creating clearer, better pathways for learners.
 - Reviewing the Guidance and Career Education curriculum to ensure that it exposes students to a variety of learning pathways.
 - Working with educators, update curriculum and assessment practices for the teaching of the global competencies that are necessary for the current and future economy, such as critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, self-direction, collaboration, communication, global citizenship and sustainability. This should include continued work to extend more play- and inquired-based learning into the elementary grades.

As you know, taking action on the recommendations contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report is a priority for our government. That is why we released *The Journey Together*, a document that serves as a blueprint for making our government's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples a reality. As we move forward with the implementation of the report, I ask you and your fellow Cabinet members to work together, in co-operation with our Indigenous partners, to help achieve real and measurable change for Indigenous communities.

Having made significant progress over the past year in implementing our community hubs strategy, I encourage you and your Cabinet colleagues to ensure that the Premier's Special Advisor on Community Hubs and the Community Hubs Secretariat, at the Ministry of Infrastructure, are given the support they need to continue their

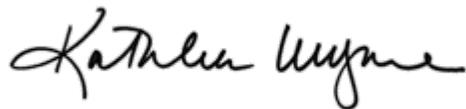
vital cross-government work aimed at making better use of public properties, encouraging multi-use spaces and helping communities create financially sustainable hub models.

Responsible fiscal management remains an overarching priority for our government — a priority echoed strongly in our 2016 Budget. Thanks to our disciplined approach to the province's finances over the past two years, we are on track to balance the budget next year, in 2017–18, which will also lower the province's debt-to-GDP ratio. Yet this is not the moment to rest on our past accomplishments: it is essential that we work collaboratively across every sector of government to support evidence-based decision-making to ensure programs and services are effective, efficient and sustainable, in order to balance the budget by 2017–18, maintain balance in 2018–19, and position the province for longer-term fiscal sustainability.

Marathon runners will tell you that an event's halfway mark is an opportunity to reflect on progress made — but they will also tell you that it is the ideal moment to concentrate more intently and to move decisively forward. At this halfway mark of this government's mandate, I encourage you to build on the momentum that we have successfully achieved over the past two years, to work in tandem with your fellow ministers to advance our economic plan and to ensure that Ontario remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

I look forward to working together with you to build opportunity and prosperity for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Wynne
Premier

Updated: August 9, 2019

Published: September 23, 2016

Related

[Ministry website \(http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/\)](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/)

[Read all 2016 mandate letters \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/mandate-letters-2016\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/mandate-letters-2016)