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Archived - September 2016 Mandate letter: Environment and Climate Change

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities.



September 23, 2016

The Honourable Glen Murray
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
77 Wellesley Street West
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Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Minister Murray:

Welcome back to your role as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. 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:

- Reintroduced and passed a strengthened *Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015*, designed to give the province new tools to protect watersheds, beaches, wetlands and coastal areas.
- Put in place an Ontario cap and trade program which will limit greenhouse gas emissions, reward innovative companies and create more opportunities for investment in Ontario.
- Introduced and passed the *Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016*, which makes the government accountable for responsibly and transparently investing every dollar from the cap and trade program into actions that reduce greenhouse gas pollution, create jobs, and help people and businesses become more climate conscious.
- Released Ontario's first Climate Change Action Plan, building on our Climate Change Strategy, which describes the actions we will take over the next five years to fight climate change, reduce greenhouse gas pollution and help move us to a prosperous low-carbon economy.
- Initiated our early actions through the \$325-million Green Investment Fund, which commits money for projects that fight climate change.
- Introduced and passed the *Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2016*, and releasing a draft strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario: Building the Circular Economy.

Your mandate is to work on protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment to ensure public health and environmental quality. Your specific priorities include:

Leading the Fight Against Climate Change

- Working with partner ministries, stakeholders, Indigenous partners and the public, oversee the implementation of Ontario's first five year plan to fight climate change, reduce greenhouse gas pollution and transition to a low-carbon economy. To ensure continued progress, initial programs and policies from the Climate Change Action Plan should be in place by 2017.
- Building on the successes of establishing an interim greenhouse gas reduction target for 2030, continue to address climate change and move towards our government's greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2020, 2030 and 2050.

Cap and Trade Carbon Market

- Continuing to implement a cap and trade carbon market, with the first auction to occur in March 2017.
- Beginning the process of linking Ontario's cap and trade program with markets in Québec and California, while working with other jurisdictions to determine their interest in joining the regulatory fee-based carbon market operating through the Western Climate Initiative.
- Working with stakeholders, Indigenous partners, partner ministries and other Western Climate Initiative jurisdictions to develop a robust set of compliance offsets that include Ontario-based compliance offsets. In addition, develop a quality, branded, voluntary offset class for use by government and the private sector for the purpose of further greening covered sectors.
- Immediately beginning work with stakeholders, Indigenous partners, partner ministries and other Western Climate Initiative jurisdictions on a cap and trade program design for 2020 and beyond.

- Continuing to work with the federal government and advocate for a pan-Canadian approach to pricing carbon that respects effective provincial carbon pricing and puts a priority on greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Advocate that guaranteed carbon emission reductions should be the foundational principle in developing a pan-Canadian approach to carbon pricing. In these discussions with our federal partner, you will also advocate for the creation of border carbon adjustments to address carbon leakage concerns.

Climate Change Action Plan

- Establishing an organization, referred to in the action plan as a green bank, that will help achieve greenhouse gas reductions in homes, business and industry with an emphasis on providing clients with end to end support to deploy readily available technology such as geothermal, solar PV, solar thermal and energy storage. Work with stakeholders to determine the best model for service delivery with a goal of having the organization operational in 2017.
- Consistent with the requirements of the *Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016*, ensuring regular and transparent progress reporting on the Climate Change Action Plan and the use of cap and trade proceeds from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account.
- Continuing engagement to develop greenhouse gas reduction initiatives with Indigenous partners through working tables that allow for consideration of unique regional challenges and circumstances.
- Continuing to support the government in ensuring climate change mitigation and adaptation are taken into account in the government decision-making process. This will include both greenhouse gas impact analyses for government policies, legislation and regulations, as well as adaptation considerations for public infrastructure investments and government procurement decisions.
- Working with the Minister of Energy in the development of the next Long Term Energy Plan (LTEP) to facilitate alignment with Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan and our 2020 and 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. The LTEP will be guided by a number of strategic themes including greenhouse gas reductions, innovation, energy storage consumer choice and control, conservation, renewable energy, and continued mitigation of energy prices for homes and businesses.

Adapting to the Effects of Climate Change

- Working with partner ministers, stakeholders and Indigenous partners, develop a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Ontario that sets out priorities and actions Ontario will take to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Protecting Water and the Great Lakes

- Continuing to implement the *Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015*, and work with partner ministries, stakeholders, Indigenous partners and the public to develop a draft Lake Erie Action Plan in 2017 that will move us towards our target to reduce phosphorus levels in Lake Erie by 40 per cent.
- Continuing to engage local communities in clean-up and restoration efforts, including through the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund.
- Working with partners to increase scientific understanding and traditional ecological knowledge of the Great Lakes.
- Remaining vigilant on the sustainability of the Great Lakes by continuing to implement the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and monitoring and regulating intra-basin transfers.
- Continuing to work with the federal government on the implementation of the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem to protect, restore and improve the ecological integrity of the Great Lakes.
- Working with the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, partner ministries and the federal government to better understand mercury sources in the environment and their potential impacts on Ontario communities.

- Working with the ministers of Economic Development and Growth, Research, Innovation and Science, and Infrastructure, as well as key agencies such as the Ontario Clean Water Agency, continue to promote and identify ways to reduce barriers to innovation, technology deployment, adoption and commercialization of clean water technologies for municipalities and Indigenous communities. This work will include continuing to showcase Ontario's leadership in clean water to other jurisdictions.
- Exploring ways to ensure sustainability remains the top priority for the use of our surface and groundwater. Your work will acknowledge that immediate improvements are needed when it comes to water bottling practices, particularly in the face of climate change, the increasing demand on water resources by a growing population, and concerns about water security. You will report back in fall 2016 on options to reform the regulatory process for permits to take water for water bottling purposes, improve Ontarians' access to refillable water stations in public and private spaces, increase awareness of the rigorous standards municipal water systems must meet to provide the tap water most Ontarians drink, and you will work with the Minister of Finance on pricing options for water takings for bottled water in Ontario.

Increasing Waste Diversion

- In accordance with the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016*, and in consultation with partner ministers, stakeholders, Indigenous partners and the public, finalize and begin to implement the Strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario: Building the Circular Economy. Building a circular economy would also help support our fight against climate change. Begin with consultations on:
 - Developing an Organics Action Plan to divert more organic waste from landfills and to assist in the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan. A draft plan will be posted for public consultation in 2017 with implementation by spring 2018.
 - Ensuring the transition of the blue box program and the revised role of municipalities will not negatively impact Ontarians' experience with and access to blue box services.

Modernizing Processes under the Environmental Bill of Rights

- Engaging with the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and other stakeholders to identify ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of consultation, engagement and other processes under the *Environmental Bill of Rights Act* and its registry to ensure Ontarians can more easily have their voices heard on decisions that may have a significant effect on the environment.

Improving Drinking Water for Indigenous Communities

- Working with Indigenous partners, the ministers of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and Intergovernmental Affairs and the federal government, which is primarily responsible for the provision of safe water on reserves, towards a five year plan to provide First Nation reserves with access to safe drinking water, with a focus on remote communities. The ministers will work with First Nations towards developing measurable, achievable targets to monitor progress. This will include implementing the trilateral working group, consisting of First Nations, the federal government and the Government of Ontario, to help improve the state of drinking water in First Nation communities.

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 continuing to work with the ministers of Northern Development and Mines, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Transportation, and Natural Resources and Forestry. This will include ensuring that the regional and cumulative impacts of proposed development are considered, including climate change impacts.

In addition to the priority activities above, I ask that you also deliver results for Ontarians by driving progress in the following areas:

- Continue to oversee the implementation of the Green Investment Fund. These investments are part of the government's plan for securing a healthy, clean and prosperous low-carbon future by transforming the way we live, move, work and adapt to our environment, while ensuring strong, sustainable communities.
- Work with the Great Lakes Guardians' Council, which provides a forum to identify and find solutions to Great Lakes challenges, increase our science and consideration of First Nations and Métis communities' traditional knowledge, and strengthen our shared understanding of the Great Lakes.

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

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