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## Archived - September 2016 Mandate letter: Labour

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities.



September 23, 2016

The Honourable Kevin Flynn  
Minister of Labour  
400 University Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
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Dear Minister Flynn:

Welcome back to your role as Minister of Labour. 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 significant progress on our original mandate and have achieved the following key results:

- Amended the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to more effectively prevent and address sexual violence and harassment in the workplace.
- Implemented and enforced expanded protections for vulnerable foreign workers in Ontario under the *Employment Protections for Foreign Nationals Act*.
- Amended the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* to ensure that partial disability benefits for injured workers keep pace with inflation.
- Improved the way we prevent and acknowledge workplace mental health issues, such as traumatic mental stress, including requiring prevention plans, holding annual summits to ensure best prevention practices and providing a streamlined Workplace Safety and Insurance process for first responders who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Amended a number of regulations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to increase protections for construction and mining workers.
- Established the Construction Health and Safety Plan Advisory Group to strengthen workplace accident prevention in the construction sector.
- In partnership with the Ontario Women's Directorate, appointed a Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee to make recommendations to assist in the creation of a strategy aimed at closing the gender wage gap. The government released the committee's final report and will be moving forward on the committee's recommendations.
- As part of the government's continued commitment to prevent workplace injuries and illness, the Ministry of Labour has conducted 21 provincial inspection blitzes and 163,700 field visits since 2014, resulting in more than 290,000 compliance orders for safety issues across all sectors.
- Committed to investing \$4.38 million for projects that will improve occupational health and safety for workers through the Occupational Health and Safety Prevention and Innovation Program and the Research Opportunities Program.

Your mandate is to advance safe, fair and harmonious workplace practices that are essential to the social and economic well-being of the people of Ontario. Your specific priorities include:

## **Reviewing the *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Relations Act***

- Informed by the Changing Workplaces Review, proposing amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Relations Act* to provide protections for employees while supporting business in today's changing economy and its workplaces. You will expedite the work to clarify personal emergency leave by end of 2016.
- Strengthening enforcement of employment standards, through further resources if necessary, ensuring employers who do not respect protections for workers are held to account.

## **Enabling Harmonious Labour Relations**

- Working with the Ontario College of Trades and stakeholders to address outstanding concerns raised in relation to the report on Supporting a Strong and Sustainable Ontario College of Trades including introducing legislation to amend the *Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009* by the end of 2016, and ensuring that the Ontario College of Trades is a key partner in the implementation of the recommendations of the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel.

## Closing the Gender Wage Gap

- Working with the ministers of Women's Issues, Finance, Economic Development and Growth, Education, and Advanced Education and Skills Development, develop a strategy for the economic empowerment of women that addresses the needs of women at all economic levels. As part of this empowerment strategy, you will work with the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) to develop a Gender Wage Gap strategy that will provide practical recommendations by spring 2018 to close the wage gap between women and men. In order to map out this plan, you will consult with stakeholders including leaders in the business, labour, human resources and equality-advocacy communities to garner practical input and expertise.

## Promoting Occupational Health and Safety

- Continuing to implement the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel to transform Ontario's occupational health and safety system.
- Developing new strategies to eliminate violence in the workplace including continuing to work with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and Minister of Education to address violence in health care, education and other broader public sector workplaces.

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 protect workers' health and safety through workplace accident prevention with targeted efforts towards the construction and mining sectors.
- While you continue to review the substantive aspects of the interest arbitration process, identify changes that will facilitate a more efficient process.
- Continue to expand mental health protections for Ontario's workers.
- Continue to ensure that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board provides a fair and equitable system for injured workers and employers while supporting it in its efforts to eliminate the unfunded liability by 2021-2022, and also reducing overall premiums on average.
- Continue to engage organized labour, employee advocates and employers to ensure our economy thrives through the creation of safe jobs and fair workplaces.

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

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