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Archived - September 2016 Mandate letter: Natural Resources and Forestry

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities.



September 23, 2016

The Honourable Kathryn McGarry
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 6630, 6th Floor, Whitney Block
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Minister McGarry:

Welcome to your role as Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. 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 on safeguarding and sustainably managing Ontario's natural resources. As a government, we have achieved the following key results:

- Continued work with forestry companies, environmental organizations, First Nations and community representatives to ensure that Crown forest resources are being put to their best use in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fashion.
- Passed the *Invasive Species Act* in October 2015, making Ontario the only jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation.
- Continued progress on developing a Far North Land Use Strategy, with input from First Nations, resource developers, scientists, environmental organizations, municipalities and the general public.
- Continued to engage with stakeholders, municipalities, Indigenous communities and minister colleagues to address the recommendations of the Standing Committee on General Government's Report on the Review of the *Aggregate Resources Act*.

Your mandate is to oversee the province's natural resources and work to safeguard Ontario's provincial parks, forests, fisheries, wildlife, mineral aggregates, Crown lands and waters. Your specific priorities include:

Supporting Forestry

- Continuing to work with forestry companies, environmental organizations, First Nations and community representatives to ensure that Crown forest resources are being put to their best use — and in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fashion.
- Working with municipalities and other partners to promote urban forestry, continue to work towards the commitment of planting 50 million trees provincewide.
- Working with the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and partner ministries, continue to encourage and enhance capacity for Indigenous communities to participate in — and take advantage of — the forestry resources and other economic opportunities, including sharing in the benefits of the forestry sector.
- Continuing to advocate for Ontario's interests in a new softwood lumber agreement, and supporting the federal government in negotiations.
- Working with the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth to support the forest industry accessing the Forestry Growth Fund.

Guiding Land Use Planning

- Launching a Far North Land Use Strategy in fall 2016/winter 2017, as required under the *Far North Act*. The strategy will provide policy guidance on which joint planning teams in the Far North can draw as they develop community-based land use plans, contain land use designations and provide guidance for developers as they plan projects.
- Supporting the Minister of Municipal Affairs in finalizing the co-ordinated review of the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plans, which includes the Niagara Escarpment Plan. This includes continuing the work to protect natural heritage systems by supporting the work of the relevant ministries in their efforts to complete the mapping of these areas in summer 2017.

- Continuing to work with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to support comprehensive environmental assessments and planning related to projects in the Ring of Fire.

Managing Aggregates

- Introducing a revised *Aggregate Resources Act* in fall 2016. Continue to work with stakeholders, Indigenous communities and other affected ministers on the impacts of the regulatory and legislative changes that will provide stronger environmental accountability and improved oversight, participation and information flow, and address fees and royalties.

Leading Conservation

- Working with other ministries, municipalities and partners to create a Strategic Plan for Ontario's Wetlands by 2017, with the goal of stopping the net loss of wetlands.
- Continuing the review of the *Conservation Authorities Act* which will identify opportunities to improve the legislative, regulatory and policy framework that currently governs the creation, operation and activities of conservation authorities.

Strengthening Biodiversity

- Supporting implementation of Biodiversity: It's In Our Nature, the Ontario Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity 2012-2020. Continue to work with other ministers, the Ontario Biodiversity Council and partners to implement the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy to advance measures aimed at further strengthening and protecting Ontario's biodiversity.
- Working with industry, environmental non-governmental organizations and partners to continue to support the implementation of the *Endangered Species Act* in a way that promotes the protection and recovery of caribou and all species at risk in Ontario.
- Supporting the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on the development of a Pollinator Health Action Plan to be released in fall 2016.

Minimizing the Impact of Invasive Species

- Through the *Invasive Species Act*, address concerns surrounding the prevention, early detection and eradication of — and rapid response to — invasive species in Ontario's natural environment.
- Advocating and collaborating with other jurisdictions to address the threat of invasive species. Present Ontario's concerns at the bi-national and federal level.

Supporting the Climate Change Action Plan

- Working with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to implement the Climate Change Action Plan and develop a natural resource climate adaptation strategy as part of the government's commitment to renew "Climate Ready."
- Continuing to work with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and partner ministries in implementing the Climate Change Action Plan, including developing a land use carbon inventory to support estimation of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from lands in Ontario and supporting the development of a tall wood building guide and a wood stove exchange/replacement program targeted at northern and rural communities.

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

- Continue protecting and promoting sustainable use of Ontario's environment, ecosystems and resources.
- Continue to market and promote the public's active use of Ontario's provincial parks.

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.

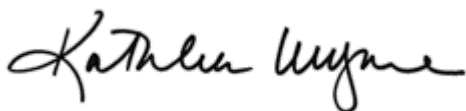
Having made significant progress over the past year in implementing our community hubs strategy, I encourage you and your Cabinet colleagues to ensure that the Premier's Special Advisor on Community Hubs and the Community Hubs Secretariat, at the Ministry of Infrastructure, are given the support they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