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Archived - September 2016 Mandate letter: Northern Development and Mines

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities.



September 23, 2016

The Honourable Michael Gravelle
Minister of Northern Development and Mines
99 Wellesley Street West
Room 5630, 5th Floor, Whitney Block
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Minister Gravelle:

Welcome back to your role as Minister of Northern Development and Mines. 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 promoting Northern Ontario's economic, community and business environment. As a government, we have achieved the following key results:

- Introduced a renewed Mineral Development Strategy after extensive consultations with stakeholders, the public and Indigenous people, thereby strengthening our economy and positioning the province as the global leader in sustainable mineral exploration and development. For example, our government recently launched a new Junior Exploration Assistance Program, which will support more than 32 exploration projects across Northern Ontario, as well as the Aboriginal Participation Fund, which will help Indigenous communities to better understand the mining sector and realize greater benefits from mining activities in or near their communities.
- Invested over \$670 million through the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate (NIER) program since 2010 to help Northern Ontario's largest industrial electricity consumers reduce their electricity costs, sustain jobs and maintain global competitiveness.
- Introduced legislation as part of the ongoing *Mining Act* Modernization process to implement the online registration of mining claims as well as a modernized electronic mining lands administration system. If passed, these changes would help ensure Ontario remains the global leader in mineral exploration and development.
- Committed over \$1 billion since 2014 to highway infrastructure projects across the North through the Northern Highways Program, including \$550 million in 2016-17, creating or sustaining 5,400 jobs.
- Working with the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, invested over \$277 million, targeting 5,420 jobs for creation or retention, in Northern Ontario since June 2014.
- Continued to work with Indigenous partners and local communities on development in the Ring of Fire, such as investing in socio-economic development supports, workforce readiness and skills development and training that have benefited more than 3,100 First Nations people.

Your mandate is to promote Northern economic and community development, oversee the Ontario mineral sector and help to deliver programs and services for Northerners. Your specific priorities include:

Developing the Ring of Fire

- Co-ordinating and leading the development of the Ring of Fire to create opportunities in Northern Ontario's resource and mineral sector. Your goal is to maximize economic and social opportunities for Ontario, First Nations and Canada.
- Working to upgrade existing roads and infrastructure in the region that would connect with future Ring of Fire infrastructure with a target of 2018 to commence road work.
- Continuing to collaborate with First Nations and industry partners to ensure that development meets their needs, including strengthening the relationship through continued investment in social and economic improvement projects located in the communities and regional infrastructure to support all-season road access for communities and resource development in the Ring of Fire.
- Continuing to work with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry on decisions relating to environmental assessments, cumulative and regional environmental impacts — and long-term monitoring in the Ring of Fire, including the assessment of carbon storage.
- Continuing to actively engage the federal government to proactively leverage environmental, economic and social opportunities in the Ring of Fire.

Strengthening Ontario's Mining Sector

- Delivering on the commitments in the renewed Mineral Development Strategy to ensure that the provincial minerals sector continues to drive sectoral innovation, promote environmental sustainability, health and safety, and the training of a highly skilled workforce.
- Continuing to encourage and enhance capacity for Indigenous communities to participate in — and take advantage of — mineral resource development and other economic opportunities, including sharing in the benefits of the mining sector.
- Hosting the world-class Mines and Money Americas conference in Toronto for the first time in the forum's 13-year history. Ontario will also lead the development and delivery of the Mining Innovation Summit in Sudbury to identify priorities and opportunities to better support innovation, commercialization, and technological adoption in Ontario's mining sector.

Driving Growth in Northern Ontario

- Working with colleague ministers, municipalities, Indigenous partners and key stakeholders, complete the five year progress update for the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario in 2017 to ensure continued growth in the North, and that we are delivering on the priorities of Northerners.
- Continuing to lead our government's efforts to integrate and co-ordinate Northern policy and planning activities, informed by the Growth Plan.
- Seeking federal support, and working with colleague ministers and Indigenous partners on a modern broadband network across Northern Ontario.
- Promoting Northern Ontario's key export and investment potential to the global marketplace.
- Supporting the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development in the delivery of the recommendations of the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel to ensure that Northern interests and priorities are represented.

Supporting a Dynamic Business Climate in the North

- Launching an updated Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program that provides ongoing support for large industrial facilities in the North in spring 2017.
- Continuing to support the Minister of Transportation in developing a Northern Ontario Multi-Modal Transportation Strategy by 2017 that includes consideration of all-season roads in the Far North and intercommunity bus travel.
- Working with the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, as well as key stakeholders, to build on the Ontario mining cluster's competitive advantage to address transformative, world-class research and commercialization opportunities through the cluster planning and brain-belt initiatives.

Supporting the Climate Change Action Plan

- Continuing to work with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change in implementing the Climate Change Action Plan, advancing mining innovation in a low-carbon economy and, in particular, accelerating the development and commercialization of clean technologies that will support greenhouse gas emissions reduction across the mining sector.
- Working with ministers of Economic Development and Growth, Research, Innovation and Science, and the Environment and Climate Change, and partner ministries to strengthen the low-carbon clean tech sector, update regulatory requirements, help support and deploy low-carbon technologies in Northern Ontario, and advance development and adoption of low carbon mining technologies through the mining innovation cluster.

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 implement a provincewide online mining claim registration and integrated land management system, as part of to the ongoing *Mining Act* modernization process.
- Continue to work in partnership with the Minister of Energy and remote Indigenous communities to reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation. Where community support exists, work with Indigenous organizations to develop advanced microgrid solutions which would support economic growth by reducing reliance on diesel fuel and enable stable, predictable sources of power.
- Continue to promote efficiency with a balanced approach to transforming the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) to ensure sustainable employment, continued economic growth and a strong transportation network in Northern Ontario, while maintaining the government's commitment to keep the ONTC's business lines in public hands.
- Support the ONTC through strategic investments to improve the service and accessibility of motor coach services and to refurbish passenger rail coaches for use on the Polar Bear Express. This will sustain jobs and ensure that important transportation services can be delivered more effectively and efficiently.

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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