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Archived - September 2016 Mandate letter: Women's Directorate

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities.



September 23, 2016

The Honourable Tracy MacCharles
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues
Ontario Women's Directorate
777 Bay Street, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J4

Dear Minister MacCharles:

Welcome back to your role as Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. 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 gender equality and opportunity for Ontarians. As a government, we have achieved the following key results:

- Developed and launched *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*, which included award-winning public education campaigns, training for crown attorneys who prosecute sexual assaults, the establishment of Ontario's Permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women, the development of up-to-date training for front-line workers, a pilot program to provide free independent legal advice to survivors of sexual assault, a provincial summit on best practices to end gender-based violence, and the introduction and passage of the *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, 2015*.
- Developed and launched *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women*, which commits to introduce new programs and legislation to support Indigenous women experiencing violence, provide enhanced training for Crown Attorneys and police, develop public awareness and prevention campaigns, and improve data collection to monitor progress.
- Developed and launched Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking aimed at increasing awareness and co-ordination, enhancing justice-sector initiatives and improving survivors' access to services.
- Announced new gender diversity targets to ensure more women have the opportunity to reach top leadership positions at provincial agencies, other government organizations, and businesses, and convened a steering committee with the Minister of Finance to provide input on the implementation of these targets and the recommendations of the government-commissioned report: *Gender Diversity on Boards in Canada: Recommendations for Accelerating Progress*.
- In partnership with the Minister of Labour, 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, and received the committee's report.
- Expanded access to training and skills development programs for women in low-income and at-risk situations.

Your mandate is to work collaboratively with affected ministers, broader public sector partners, and stakeholders across the province to:

Support Women's Economic Empowerment

- Lead the development of a government-wide approach to the economic empowerment of women that addresses the needs of women at all economic levels, in partnership with the Ministers of Labour, Finance, Education, Economic Development and Growth, and Advanced Education and Skills Development, by spring 2017, and continue to collaborate with key partners to implement this approach.
- Seek advice from the Women in Business Steering Committee and work with the Minister of Finance to develop a comprehensive plan to implement the strategy on Gender Diversity on Boards in Canada, by spring 2017. This would include plans to implement the target that women make up at least 40 per cent of all appointments to provincial boards and agencies by 2019.
- In partnership with the Minister of Labour, assist with the development of a Gender Wage Gap strategy that will provide practical recommendations by spring 2018 to close the wage gap between women and men.

Ensure a Gender Lens is Brought to the Development of Government Policies and Programs

- Lead the development of gender-based analysis to be applied to support and inform the development of policies and programs across government.

Protect Women from Violence and Harassment

- Complete the implementation of the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan, and update Ontarians on progress through annual reporting.
- Review existing programs and services and create an updated domestic violence action plan, with the Attorney General, Minister of Community and Social Services, and Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.
- Implement Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women in partnership with the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, develop a framework to ensure that it meets its intended goals, and provide advice to government on areas for further work.
- Lead the implementation of Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking in partnership with the Minister of Community and Social Services and other affected ministries, and support increased awareness, enhanced justice-sector initiatives and improved access to services for survivors.

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

- Support the Poverty Reduction Strategy through improving opportunities for women living in poverty by continuing to deliver training programs for low-income women in skilled trades and information technology to reduce poverty, support entrepreneurship, and increase economic security.
- Continue to deliver community-based services and employment training for women who have experienced domestic violence.
- Develop a streamlined Economic Security Program to provide programming and services that are responsive to community-identified needs.

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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