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Archived - September 2016 Mandate letter: Accessibility

Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities.



September 23, 2016

The Honourable Tracy MacCharles
Minister Responsible for Accessibility
80 Grosvenor Street
11th Floor, Hepburn Block
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1E9

Dear Minister MacCharles:

Welcome to your role as Minister Responsible for Accessibility. 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:

- For the first time, we appointed a Minister Responsible for Accessibility.
- Responding to the Moran Report, the government committed to identifying barriers to accessibility that must be overcome in individual sectors, starting with the health sector.
- The Path to 2025: Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan was launched, which focuses on three priorities: engaging employers to understand the value of hiring people with disabilities, building on the province's accessibility laws and standards, and raising awareness of accessibility in innovative ways.
- Completed the first review of an accessibility standard (the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service) and introduced amendments to make the standard more effective in making goods, services and facilities more accessible to people with disabilities, and began the review of the Transportation Standard.
- Launched a provincewide marketing campaign in November 2014 to increase awareness of the importance of complying with the accessibility requirements and filing a compliance report, which successfully increased the number of reports filed by 150 per cent compared to the 2012 reporting deadline.
- In partnership with the Attorney General and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, made amendments to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) as part of the review of legislation that has a high impact on members of the public — and specifically people with disabilities — with a view to identifying barriers to accessibility and opportunities to address barriers, which were incorporated into The Path to 2025 Action Plan.
- Appointed The Honourable David C. Onley as Special Advisor on Accessibility.

Your mandate is to help people with disabilities realize their full potential and oversee the implementation of the province's groundbreaking *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. Your specific priorities include:

Implementing the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*

- Completing the review of the Transportation Standard.
- Reporting, in 2018, on progress towards making Ontario fully accessible.
- Building on work with the Attorney General and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, lead the ongoing review of legislation and regulations across government with the goal of eliminating barriers for persons with disabilities and update government on your progress in 2017.
- Establishing a Standards Development Committee in fall 2016 to develop a Health Standard under the AODA.
- Establishing Standards Development Committees in fall 2016 to review the Information and Communications Standard and the Employment Standard.

Educating the Public and Organizations in All Sectors on the Importance of Accessibility and Requirements Under the Legislation

- Taking steps to increase compliance reporting rates among private/not-for-profit sector organizations by an additional 50 per cent in 2017.
- Introducing a certification program to recognize organizations that are gold-standard leaders in accessibility.

- Working with key public sector partners and stakeholders to launch a repository of municipal best practices.
- Launching a public education campaign to raise awareness of accessibility issues for both business and the public.

Ensuring that People with Disabilities are Able to Fully Use Their Skills and Talents to Contribute to Their Communities and the Economy

- Delivering a provincial employment strategy for people with disabilities that builds on the Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities by the end of 2016, in partnership with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth.

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 raise awareness of entities' obligations under the AODA and take progressive steps to increase compliance, including enforcement.
- Release an annual compliance and enforcement plan and report back to inform the public on our efforts, and monitor compliance trends among obligated organizations.
- Work with other ministers to provide an accessibility perspective to help inform the development, delivery, and assessment of policies and programs.
- Work with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in leading Ontario's work with the federal government and other provinces and territories on the development of national accessibility legislation.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Wynne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathleen Wynne
Premier

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