

Transcript: Premier Wynne's Remarks at Queen's Park (Sept 23, 2016)

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PREMIER WYNNE'S REMARKS AT QUEEN'S PARK

Date: September 23, 2016
Length: 8:57 minutes
Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Good morning. Bonjour. So you will know this morning that Ontario's cabinet ministers have just received their detailed mandate letters.

[Speaking French]

And before I talk about what's in the letters in a sort of general way, and they are right here in this binder, paper copies; they are online. Yes I'm going to read them all to you and you can shout dispense if you'd like. But I want to talk about why we do this release and why, you know, I'm the first Premier of Ontario to make mandate letters available to the public and what's the rationale behind that. I ran on a platform in 2014 and we talked in broad strokes about what we were going to do to build the province up, and I was elected on that platform. And what the mandate letters do is they show exactly how that work is happening all across government. And I can remember when I was first the Minister of Education in 2006, it was very clear to me that the level of detail that occurs in mandate letters is not something that the general public always has access to. So I thought, and I continue to think, that it is a good way of letting people understand what it is that we're doing. So there's a back-and-forth between ministers and ministers' offices and me and my office as we go through the process of clarifying exactly what the mandates will be— what their ministries will be working on to implement our economic plan and how better to amplify the promises and the plans that we have in place and what the specific activities are that we've agreed on they will undertake. And what this process does is it helps us to focus on what is doable, you know, what can we accomplish and how do we get there. And it keeps us focused on the commitments that we made during the election because part of the letter is a check against the first mandate letters to demonstrate what the achievements are and what are the successes, where are the things that still need to be worked on. So the mandate letters come out of that process and so these mandate letters are a bit different than the first ones because they have that outline of the achievements that have been completed. So essentially these are the marching orders for each of the ministers, reflecting what we have agreed on are the critical areas for them to work on. So by putting all 34 mandate letters online today as I did two years ago, I'm giving everyone in the province the opportunity to know exactly what their government is doing in a very, very detailed way. And I note that after the throne speech there were some questions about why wasn't something about 'X' or 'Y' subject in the throne speech. Well the throne speech is the broad stroke and we announced some new initiatives in the throne speech but the mandate letters are really where people can see the detail on every single ministry. So, this is, you know, this is a manifestation of the kind of openness that I think needs to be in place with government. It means that everyone with an interest can access the inner workings of what's going on in ministries and so that's what the release of these letters do. The mandate letters also give detail on how the plan that we are implementing is building Ontario up in a detailed way, but put together it shows the accumulated impact of the work that we're doing.

[Speaking French]

So, what the letters outline; they include the work that we will do as we go forward and so work that we'll do to support families by creating an additional 100,000 child care spaces for infants, for toddlers and pre-schoolers. So those kids in the 0 to 4 age group. It talks about the way that we'll improve math skills as we continue to build an education system that is one of the best in the world and that helps every student to reach his or her potential, and that includes putting in place the Ontario Student Grant starting next September where tuition free for tens of thousands of middle and low-income families. Kids will have access to free or better than free tuition. It talks about the steps that we are taking to build a health care system that everyone can rely on; a primary care guarantee, that access to a primary care, a physician or a nurse practitioner, and the hiring of more frontline workers to provide care in home and community care. It talks about the—they talk about the on-going building of new hospitals, bridges, schools, roads, transit that add up to the largest infrastructure investment that Ontario has ever made. And the steps that we're taking to create a competitive, supportive environment for business that's driven by innovation and exports which is how we are going to continue to grow the economy in Ontario. And also the leadership role that we're going to continue to play in working with the federal government on issues like climate change, on fighting for retirement security for people in the province. So that's the commitment that we've made to the people of Ontario and those details are outlined in the letters. The new mandate letters also outline the immediate things that we're doing to make economic growth more inclusive because as I've said, we are growing the economy in Ontario, we're having some success at that, but not everybody is sharing equally and so there's information obviously about the announcements that we've made about electricity costs and, you know, that's one of the recognitions that we understand that people are struggling with; costs every day in their lives and they need not just the support of those long-term visions and those long-term investments, but also day by day they need some support. So that's why we moved the Debt Retirement Charge from residential bills and created the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It's why we've brought forward new legislation that will give everyone the permanent relief on their bills of the amount equal to the provincial portion of the HST, the 8-per-cent. And we've also provided additional savings to rural customers and to smaller businesses. So that's a recognition; one of the issues that is a recognition of those costs that people are dealing with every single day. I talk in my mandate letter—in the mandate letters; I'll just say to close that marathon runners will tell you that the halfway mark is an opportunity to momentarily feel good about having come halfway, but more than that it's about looking to the next half of the race. So last year our economy grew at twice the national average, almost 6,000 net new jobs have been created since the last recession, unemployment has reached an 8-year low. So we are on track; some good things are happening, but in the looking forward we know that there is much more to do. And so I took on big, long-term challenges when I ran in 2014 and that's what we've been tackling in the first half of this mandate and Ontario's fundamentals are growing as a result of the work that's been done, not just by government, but in concert with the private sector and everyone in the province. But that in itself is not enough. We recognize that there's more that we have to do to implement those plans and to acknowledge what people are dealing with every single day. So that's what the mandate letters are about and we will work as hard as we can as a government to continue to serve the people of Ontario in the second half of our mandate. Happy to take your questions.