

**Ministry of
Transportation**

Office of the Minister

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October 1, 2020

Tom Laughren
Commission Chair
Ontario Northland Transportation Commission
555 Oak Street East
North Bay, ON P1B 8L3

Dear Mr. Laughren:

I am pleased to write to you in your capacity as Chair of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC). Pursuant to the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, this letter sets out my expectations for the ONTC for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Ontario's board-governed agencies are vital partners in ensuring the delivery of high-quality service to Ontarians. The people of Ontario depend on you to provide leadership to your agency's Board of Directors, management, and staff. Ontarians rely on you and your fellow Commissioners to establish the goals, objectives, and strategic direction for the agency consistent with its mandate, government policies, and my directions. I thank you for your willingness to serve.

This has been a particularly challenging time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I wanted to recognize the hard work of the ONTC in maintaining essential transportation services and continuing to adapt to support the health and safety of its employees and passengers. The province will continue to work closely with its partners as we move toward recovery.

I also wanted to acknowledge the achievements of the agency over the past year, and in particular the expansion of motor coach service in Northwestern Ontario with new connectivity provided through service to Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. The launch of this service in May 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the important service the ONTC provides to the people of Northern Ontario.

As part of the government of Ontario, agencies are expected to act in the best interests of Ontarians by being efficient, effective, and providing value for money to taxpayers. This includes:

Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

- Operating within your agency's allocations.

- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, innovative practices, and/or improved program sustainability.
- Identifying and pursuing efficiencies and savings.
- Complying with applicable direction related to supply chain centralization, Realty Interim Measures and Agency Office Location Criteria.

Transparency and Accountability

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.
- Adhering to requirements of the Agencies and Appointment Directive, and responding to audit findings, where applicable.
- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the board's role in agency governance and accountability.

Risk Management

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment and mitigation of risks, including planning for and responding to emergency situations such as COVID-19.

Workforce Management

- Optimizing your agency's workforce to enable efficient and effective fulfilment of government priorities, while enhancing customer service standards.
- Streamlining back office functions to ensure that all available resources are redirected towards the critical front-line services that Ontarians depend upon.

Data Collection

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting, including by leveraging available or new data solutions to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.
- Supporting transparency and data sharing with the ministry, as appropriate.

Digital Delivery and Customer Service

- Exploring and implementing digitization or digital modernization strategies for the provision of services online and continuing to meet and exceed customer service standards through transition.
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery in all situations, including COVID-19.

In addition to the government priorities above for all agencies, in 2021-22, the ONTC's specific priorities are as follows:

Supporting economic recovery after COVID-19

- Supporting the economic recovery of the province by providing essential transportation services across Northern Ontario.
- Continuing to prioritize the safety and health of passengers, employees and the communities served, and adapt operations and services based on best practices and in consultation with Public Health Authorities.

Delivery of efficient, safe and reliable transportation services in Northern Ontario

- Considering innovative solutions and partnership opportunities to enhance transportation services in northern and rural communities.
- Maintaining high quality motor coach and passenger rail services, while continuing to monitor and adjust services to ensure customers receive the service they need while managing costs.
- Supporting the Ministry of Transportation in advancement of the Northern Transportation Plan.
- Continuing to deliver the new permanent intercommunity bus service to Thunder Bay and Winnipeg to provide connectivity in Northwestern Ontario.
- Providing the Ministry of Transportation with ridership data and other information to support evaluation of the return of passenger rail in Northern Ontario.

Improvements to the efficiency and long-term sustainability of ONTC operations and business lines

- Optimizing rail remanufacturing and repair operations to ensure services are competitive, while maintaining full cost recovery and high-quality repair and refurbishment services.
- Optimizing rail freight services to find efficiencies and improve operations while continuing to offer efficient, reliable and safe rail transportation services to shippers and industry in Northeastern Ontario.
- Continuing development of enhanced performance measures to support the collection of data, monitor and report on all business lines, and to assess and refine the effectiveness of the agency's delivery of services.

Implementation of Capital Asset Management Plan

- Continuing implementation of the ten-year capital asset management plan to support the long-term sustainability of the agency and state of good repair of assets, reduce ongoing maintenance expenses, and to provide improved safety to passengers and employees.
- Developing business capabilities for ONTC to adhere to their Asset Management policy and principles, and to support the organization to mature Enterprise Asset Management practices in accordance with industry standards.
- Maintaining ongoing improvements and investments in equipment and facilities; motor coaches and rolling stock; and bridges, culverts, and track infrastructure.
- Continuing the development of performance measures to highlight the progress of the capital asset management plan, and report on the state of good repair for ONTC assets.

Accountability and Governance

- Implementing the projects and initiatives listed above with a focus on ensuring value for money.,
- Working closely with MTO on work to continue to assess and modernize the agency and its enabling legislation.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,


Caroline Mulroney
Minister of Transportation

- c. Kinga Surma, Associate Minister of Transportation
Laurie LeBlanc, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation
Chad Evans, Acting President & Chief Executive Officer, ONTC
John Lieou, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation
James Nowlan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation