

**Ministry of  
Transportation**

**Ministère des  
Transports**



Office of the Minister

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February 14, 2024

107-2024-365

Alan Spacek  
Commission Chair  
Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC)  
555 Oak Street East  
North Bay, ON P1B 8L3

Dear Mr. Spacek:

I am pleased to share our government's 2024-25 priorities for the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC).

ONTC has a key role in addressing the unique transportation challenges in Northern Ontario and, as chair, you play a vital role in helping the ONTC achieve its mandate to provide efficient, affordable, safe and reliable transportation services in Northern Ontario. It is important that your agency's goals and objectives continue to align with our government's priorities and direction.

The timely exchange of information and data between the ONTC and the Ministry of Transportation is essential for fostering transparency and ensuring good agency-government practices in the public sector. This open communication facilitates informed decision-making, enhances public trust and allows for effective collaboration in the planning and execution of transportation projects that benefit Ontario.

ONTC is expected to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario to achieve the initiatives outlined in the Annual Letter of Direction in a manner that is aligned with its government approved multi-year funding allocation. The ministry will continue to work with the agency in refining priorities as required on an ongoing basis.

The 2024-25 transportation-specific initiatives are as follows. I ask that you provide progress updates on a quarterly basis.

1. Reinstate the Northlander Passenger Rail service between Toronto and Timmins, with a rail connection to Cochrane, with a target in-service date in the mid-2020s. To support this work, establish a project team with the necessary competencies and skills to support implementation.

2. Continued development and implementation of the agency's capital asset management plan and asset management data reporting to support the long-term sustainability of the agency and state of good repair of assets, reduce ongoing maintenance expenses and provide improved safety for passengers and employees. Report-back on the Enterprise Asset Management program implementation with respect to motor coach services and provide an overview of future milestones for the overall EAM program, including timelines, by July 1, 2024.
3. Work towards modernizing the agency by implementing ONTC's Modernization Action Plan (MAP) and supporting the repeal and replacement of the legacy *Ontario Northland Transportation Commission Act*. Progress towards the completion of MAP initiatives should be captured in quarterly reports to MTO via an approved reporting framework, in alignment with MAP key performance indicators, milestones and timelines.
4. Complete a review of the agency's organizational structure, based on efficient and effective organizational design principles, and taking into account workplace culture, safety and diversity. This includes a strategy to manage the agency's modernization and improve recruiting initiatives, with consideration of both English and French opportunities, to attract, develop and retain talent. ONTC is to submit the review and strategy to the ministry by July 1, 2024, followed by quarterly progress reporting thereafter.
5. Develop a performance measurement framework in alignment with ministry priorities, including a technology-enabled data collection strategy and monitoring and evaluation processes on all business lines. The ministry will collaborate with ONTC, providing substantive direction and technical advice related to the required elements, definitions, considerations and timelines to support the refinement of the performance measurement framework. ONTC is to submit a draft performance measurement and reporting framework to the ministry by July 1, 2024, followed by quarterly progress reporting thereafter.
6. Work with the ministry to develop and implement a new agency governance and relationship framework to promote effective decision-making, enhance oversight, and promote clear and collaborative communications across our other ministries and agencies. The implementation of the formalized relationship management structure is to be in place by March 31, 2025.
7. Work with the ministry to ensure ONTC rail or bus service planning and partnerships are evaluated, with consideration for Indigenous communities, in terms of service coordination and integration with the existing multimodal transportation network, including with services provided by VIA Rail, private intercommunity bus providers, local transportation operators or providers. ONTC is to submit to the ministry an overview of its service planning best practices and

methodologies by September 1, 2024

8. Meaningfully engage with Indigenous communities and organizations and fulfil duty to consult obligations with Indigenous communities, ensuring consistency with provincial policies and direction for Indigenous relations, and include these activities as part of the draft performance measurement and reporting framework and quarterly progress reports that follow. Seek the advice of the ministry before entering into any significant commitments or agreements with Indigenous communities to ensure adherence to provincial policy.
9. Taking into account the safety of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQIA+ people and other marginalized groups in delivering transportation services and taking actions to combat sexual exploitation and human trafficking (e.g., training of front-line employees, public awareness, reporting policies), in accordance with the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy and continue with regular reporting as scheduled.

I am also sharing several government-wide priorities applicable to the ONTC:

### **1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management**

- Operating within the agency's financial allocations.
- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, efficiencies and savings through innovative practices, and/or improved program sustainability.
- Complying with applicable direction related to accounting practices and supply chain centralization, including leveraging Supply Ontario's bulk purchasing arrangement and working with Supply Ontario on strategic procurement initiatives.
- Complying with realty interim measures for agency office space.
- Leverage and meet benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.

### **2. Transparency and Accountability**

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices, 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, and providing the Minister with annual skills matrices to ensure boards have qualified appointees.

### **3. Risk Management**

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment and mitigation of agency risks, including cyber security, and any future emergency risks.

#### 4. Workforce/Labour Management

- Optimizing your organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery, including redeploying resources to priority areas, where needed.
- Aligning Human Resource and Accommodations strategies with OPS directives and policy.
- Adhering to TB/MBC labour and bargaining mandates.
- Prudently and efficiently managing operational funding and workforce size.

#### 5. Diversity and Inclusion

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

#### 6. Data Collection, Sharing and Use

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting, to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario when applicable regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

These are the government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies. Please see the attached guide for further details of each priority.

Thank you and your fellow board members for your continued commitment to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. Your work and ongoing support is invaluable to me and the people of Ontario.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact my Chief of Staff, Joshua Workman ([Joshua.Workman@ontario.ca](mailto:Joshua.Workman@ontario.ca)).

Sincerely,



Prabmeet Sarkaria  
Minister of Transportation

- c. Vijay Thanigasalam, Associate Minister of Transportation  
Doug Jones, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation  
Chad Evans, Chief Executive Officer, ONTC  
Melissa Djurakov, Assistant Deputy Minister, Oversight and Agency  
Governance Division, Ministry of Transportation

Felix Fung, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation  
Alena Grunwald, Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Administrative  
Officer, Ministry of Transportation

Attachment:

- Government Priorities for Agency Sector Chart