

**Ministry of
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April 29, 2025

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

2025-26 Annual Letter of Direction

Dear Mr. Spacek:

I am pleased to share our government's 2025-26 priorities for the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC).

As Chair, you play a vital role in ensuring ONTC addresses northern Ontario's unique transportation challenges by providing efficient, affordable, safe and reliable services.

ONTC's top priority must be customer, community and employee safety, achieved through continuous improvement, best practices and full compliance with health, safety, and environmental regulations.

These are the 2025-26 transportation-specific priorities for ONTC:

Major Project

1. Continue to advance work to reinstate the Northlander Passenger Rail service between Toronto and Timmins, with a rail connection to Cochrane, and an in-service date in Spring 2026. Meet key milestones to start construction of Timmins Station and undertake fleet testing and commissioning, including:
 - Contract award and commencement of construction for the new Timmins-Porcupine Station in 2025.
 - Completion of stop improvements along the ONTC-owned corridor in 2025.
 - Commence fleet testing and commissioning in Winter 2025/26.

2. Develop a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy to promote the Northlander Passenger Rail service, including outreach to key stakeholders and the public. ONTC will share its planned marketing and promotional activities with the ministry for approval, with an initial plan shared by August 31, 2025.

Modernization

3. Advance work to modernize the agency by supporting the ministry on the modernization of the *Ontario Northland Transportation Commission Act* throughout 2025-26.

Enhanced Reporting

4. Implement the performance measurement framework developed in 2024-25 and submit quarterly performance measurement reports as directed by the ministry highlighting progress on core measures that align with ministry priorities.
5. Continue to work with the ministry to develop an agency governance and relationship framework by July 31, 2025. Implement the framework throughout the second half of the fiscal year, and make further refinements as required to support its objectives.

Community and Partner Engagement

6. Meaningfully engage diverse populations and equity-deserving groups within your service areas to ensure that community needs are understood to better deliver safe, affordable, accessible and equitable access to transportation services. This includes engaging with Indigenous communities and organizations and fulfil duty to consult obligations with Indigenous communities, ensuring consistency with provincial policies and direction for Indigenous relations. ONTC must share engagement and consultation plans with the ministry and seek the ministry's advice before entering into any significant commitments or agreements with Indigenous communities.
7. Continue to take actions to combat sexual exploitation and human trafficking 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 (AHT) Strategy, including:
 - a. Training ONTC frontline staff to identify and respond to human trafficking.
 - b. Promoting the National Human Trafficking Hotline on motor coach and passenger rail services, as well as in stations using decals and posters
 - c. Continuing the Safe Ride Home and Phantom Rider Program.

I ask that you provide progress updates on the transportation-specific priorities on a quarterly basis.

Agencies are a part of government and are expected to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario and ensure that they provide value for money to taxpayers. Agencies are also required to adhere to government policies and directives.

As such, this letter set outs government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies as follows:

Innovative

8. Simplify client/customer interactions.
9. Expand and optimize digital service offerings.
10. Improve Client/ customer satisfaction.
11. Share data with Supply Ontario, when requested, regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

Sustainable

12. Strengthen public service delivery by optimizing organizational capacity and directing existing resources to priority areas.
13. Use Public Resources efficiently and
 - a) Operate within agency's financial allocations.
 - b) Prudently and responsibly manage workforce size. Where an agency requires a material increase in workforce size, the agency must provide the Minister with an HR plan for approval that provides the rationale based on government priorities and/or agency mandate.

Accountable

14. Develop and report on outcome-focused performance measures to effectively monitor and measure performance.
15. Protect individual, business or organization data by actively managing data and cybersecurity and reporting Artificial Intelligence uses.
16. Report all high risks including effective mitigation plans.
17. Align hybrid work policies with the OPS and identify and assess office optimization opportunities to reduce office realty footprint and find cost reductions.
 - a) Collaborate with MOI to identify office space opportunities.
 - b) Align with the MBC Realty Directive and the OPS Modern Office Space (OMOS) Standards.
18. Develop and encourage diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
19. Increase non-government, non-fare, non-fee revenue in alignment with a target set through discussions with the ministry and reflected in the corresponding business plan.

Please see the attached **Government Priorities 2025-26 Chart** for further details of each priority and the accompanying performance measures that can be utilised if measurements are not currently in place.

Per the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, agencies are required to align goals, objectives and strategic direction with our government's priorities and direction. As Chair, you must ensure that ONTC's business plan demonstrates the agency's plans in fulfilling the expectations and priorities above and

that progress and achievements are reported through your annual report. Compliance with these requirements is reported to Treasury Board/Management Board of Cabinet annually.

Thank you and your fellow board members for your continued commitment to the ONTC. Your work and ongoing support are invaluable to the people of Ontario.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact my chief of staff, Megan Skinner (megan.skinner2@ontario.ca).

Sincerely,



Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Minister of Transportation

c.

Chad Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Northland Transportation Commission
Megan Skinner, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Transportation
Doug Jones, Deputy Minister of Transportation
Melissa Djurakov, Assistant Deputy Minister, Oversight and Agency Governance Division, Ministry of Transportation
James Pearce, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transit Division, Ministry of Transportation
Tamara Gilbert, Assistant Deputy Minister, Integrated Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Transportation
Virginia McKimm, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services Division and Chief Administrative Officer, Ministry of Transportation

Attachment: Government Priorities 2025-26 Chart