

‘Mandate letters’ outline ministerial priorities for new Horgan cabinet

The practice of issuing ‘mandate letters’ to newly-appointed cabinet ministers is said to have begun in the late 1970s with the Privy Council Office in Ottawa.

Sent to each federal minister on the day of their appointment to cabinet (officially, the Privy Council) or when they were assigned to a new portfolio, the letters delineated issues to be attended to, and identified priority areas that should be pursued, by the new appointees.

Until recently, however, those federal mandate letters were kept secret, their contents known only to the Prime Minister and each recipient.

That changed with the November 2015 swearing-in of **Justin Trudeau** as Canada’s 23rd Prime Minister. In a break with federal practice, Trudeau made public each mandate letter – and the result was a barrage of positive publicity.

Release of the federal letters, burred the *Ottawa Citizen*, was expected to “increase the accountability of Canada’s public servants by publicly laying out what’s expected of departments.”

Yet, the newspaper also acknowledged that the Trudeau government was not the first administration in Canada to publicize ministerial marching orders – indeed, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick previously had made a practice of releasing their ministerial mandate letters.

The custom in B.C. dates back to 2001, when **Gordon Campbell**’s BCLiberal

government first was sworn into office. Over recent years, the province also has publicly released mandate letters sent to Crown corporations and other public-sector entities.

It was not surprising, therefore, that B.C.’s new NDP Premier, **John Horgan**, publicly released his ministerial mandate letters when he and his cabinet were sworn into office last June.

In total, the 22 missives – one to each full-fledged cabinet minister, plus another two to the pair of ministers of state, **Katrina Chen** and **George Chow** – contained a total list of 140 objectives and priorities (although there are some duplications that involve more than one minister).

That works out to an average of about 6.4 per minister.

A number of the items already have been implemented – Finance minister **Carole James**, along with **Claire Trevana**, who heads up Transportation and Infrastructure, quickly “eliminate[d] tolls on the Port Mann and Golden Ears bridges” (although the actual announcement was made by Horgan, himself, at a news conference on August 1), and **David Eby**, the Attorney General, promptly introduced legislation last fall to both “reform lobbying in B.C.” and “hold a province-wide referendum on proportional representation” – but many other priorities remain to be fulfilled.

Notably,

* Energy and Mines minister **Michelle Mungall** is tasked with creating

“a roadmap” for the future of B.C. energy that will drive innovation, expand energy-efficiency and conservation programs, generate new energy responsibly and sustainably, and create lasting good jobs across the province,”

* **Adrian Dix**, the Minister of Health, is going to address an issue that has bedevilled many of his predecessors, specifically, working towards “the provision of team-based primary care by establishing urgent family-care centres across the province,”

* **Scott Fraser**, as Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, is charged with working “collaboratively and respectfully with First Nations to establish a clear, cross-government vision of reconciliation to guide the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and the Tsilhqot’in Supreme Court decision,” and

* an on-going task for the Minister of Jobs, Trade and Technology, **Bruce Ralston**, will be to “develop B.C.’s national and international trade relations.”

Usually, each edition of our fortnightly *Briefing Note* will be a maximum of two pages, but this special issue – so as to accommodate all 140 of Premier Horgan’s priority directives to his new cabinet ministers – has six pages.

Readers who have any comments or questions on this or any edition of the *Briefing Note* are invited to contact us at: info@compositepublicaffairs.ca

THE MANDATE LETTERS

MELANIE MARK – Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

- * Provide greater access to adult basic education and English-language learning programs by eliminating fees.
- * Reduce the financial burden on students by eliminating interest on B.C. government student loans and establish a \$1,000 completion grant program to provide debt relief to B.C. graduates.
- * Encourage excellence in B.C.'s graduateschool programs by introducing a new graduate student scholarship fund.
- * Work with the Minister of Education to support co-op, apprenticeship and work-experience programs for high school and undergraduate students.
- * Work with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to implement effective apprenticeship ratios on government-funded infrastructure projects, and increase participation of equity-seeking groups in the skilled workforce.
- * Work with the Minister of Children and Family Development to improve the education success of former youth in care by expanding the tuition fee waiver program.
- * Expand B.C.'s technology-related post-secondary programs, co-op programs, and work to establish technology and innovation centres in key areas of the economy.
- * Develop more degree and certificate programs to increase the number of skilled workers in B.C.'s forestry sector, focusing on growing innovation and the manufactured wood products sector.

LANA POPHAM – Minister of Agriculture

- * Revitalize the Agriculture Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission.
- * Establish Grow B.C. to help young farmers access land, and support fruit and nut growers and processors to expand local food production.
- * Initiate Feed B.C. to increase the use of B.C.-grown and processed foods in hospitals, schools, and other government facilities.
- * Bring back an enhanced Buy B.C. marketing program to help local producers market their products, and work with local producers to expand market access in the rest of Canada and abroad.
- * Work with growers, processors, colleges and universities, as well as the Minister of Advanced Education and the Minister of State for Trade, to

develop a B.C. Food Innovation Centre to innovate in the processing, packaging and marketing of B.C. food products, linking local food producers with new technology, and expanding exports and access to world markets.

DAVID EBY – Attorney General

- * Introduce legislation to reform campaign finance laws to ban political contributions by corporations and unions, and set limits on individual contributions .
- * Introduce legislation to hold a province-wide referendum on proportional representation in the fall of 2018.
- * Introduce legislation to reform lobbying in BC.
- * Re-establish the Human Rights Commission.
- * Increase the number of court sheriffs, expand the use of duty counsel and increase staffing of the Court Services Branch to address court delays.
- * Improve and support legal aid, including First Nations legal services, dispute resolution services for families and expanded poverty law services to increase access to justice.
- * Work with First Nations to set targets and take action to reduce the numbers of Aboriginal people involved in the justice system and incarcerated.
- * Conduct a comprehensive operating review of ICBC.

KATRINE CONROY – Minister of Children and Family Development

- * Enhance and improve child-protection services to ensure that all children grow up in safe and nurturing environments.
- * Invest in child protection to hire additional social workers and staff to support social workers, and to implement incentives to attract social workers to rural and underserved regions.
- * Work to implement the recommendations from Grand Chief Ed John's report and provide better supports to keep Aboriginal children at home and out of care.
- * Make reducing the number of Aboriginal children entering our care system a priority.
- * Work to ensure Delegated Aboriginal Agencies are supported to offer services at the same level offered to non-Aboriginal children.
- * Increase funding for Agreements with Young Adults in order to offer supports to all youth aging out of care who need it, not just a few.

continued on page 3

- * Work with the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to expand the tuition fee waiver program and provide enhanced supports for former youth in care who pursue post-secondary education.

KATRINA CHEN – Minister of State for Child Care

- * Work with all levels of government, child-care providers, the private and not-for-profit sectors to implement a universal child-care plan that provides affordable, accessible and high-quality care and early learning to every child whose family wants or needs it, starting with infant/toddler programs before gradually expanding.
- * Provide additional investments in the Early Childhood Educator workforce through training, education and fair wages to enhance and ensure quality.
- * Accelerate the creation of new child-care spaces in communities across the province as part of building a Better BC.

JINNY SIMS – Minister of Citizens' Services

- * Institute a cap on the value and the length of government IT contracts to save money, increase innovation, improve competition and help our technology sector grow.
- * Ensure government IT and software development procurement work better for companies that hire locally and have a local supply chain.
- * Improve access to information rules to provide greater public accountability.
- * Improve response and processing times for freedom of information requests.

ROB FLEMING – Minister of Education

- * Fast-track enhancement to K-12 education funding.
- * Review the funding formula to develop a stable and sustainable model for the K-12 education system.
- * Provide additional annual funding to ensure students have the school supplies they need to succeed.
- * Create an ongoing capital fund for school playgrounds.
- * Make schools safer by accelerating the seismic upgrade program.
- * Work in partnership to build and upgrade schools in every region of the province.
- * Implement the new First Nations history curriculum, develop full-course offerings in Aboriginal languages and implement the educational Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- * Implement BC's new school curriculum and provide new technology, lab equipment, learning material and professional development support for teachers.

MICHELLE MUNGALL – Minister of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources

- * Create a roadmap for the future of B.C. energy that will drive innovation, expand energy-efficiency and conservation programs, generate new energy responsibly and sustainably, and create lasting good jobs across the province.
- * Reinvigorate the Innovative Clean Energy fund to boost investments in groundbreaking new energy technologies and climate change solutions.
- * Freeze B.C. Hydro rates while conducting a comprehensive review of the Crown corporation.
- * Immediately refer the Site C dam construction project to the B.C. Utilities Commission on the question of economic viability and consequences to British Columbians in the context of the current supply and demand conditions prevailing in the B.C. market.
- * Establish a BC Mining Jobs Task Force to create and sustain good jobs in this important industry.
- * Develop an improved and properly resourced approvals process to assess mining applications, and increase industry safety by establishing an independent oversight unit.
- * Ensure British Columbians benefit from liquefied natural gas projects by requiring proposals to meet the following four conditions:
(1) Proposals must include express guarantees of jobs and training opportunities for British Columbians;
(2) Proposals must provide a fair return for our resource;
(3) Proposals must respect and make partners of First Nations; and
(4) Proposals must protect our air, land and water, including living up to our climate commitments.

GEORGE HEYMAN – Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

- * Renew the Climate Leadership Team within the first 100 days of your mandate.
- * Implement a comprehensive climate-action strategy that provides a pathway for B.C. to prosper economically while meeting carbon pollution reduction targets, including setting a new legislated 2030 reduction target and establishing separate sectoral reduction targets and plans.
- * Work with the Minister of Finance to implement an increase of the carbon tax by \$5 per tonne per year, beginning April 1, 2018 to meet the federal government's carbon-pricing mandate. Take measures to expand the carbon tax to fugitive emissions and to slash-pile burning.
- * Revitalize the Environmental Assessment process and review the professional reliance model to ensure the legal rights of First Nations are respected, and the public's expectation of a strong, transparent process is met.

continued on page 4

- * Employ every tool available to defend B.C.'s interests in the face of the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and the threat of a seven-fold increase in tanker traffic on our coast.
- * Enact an endangered species law and harmonize other laws to ensure they are all working towards the goal of protecting our beautiful province.

CAROLE JAMES – Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier

- * Ensure Budget 2017/18 reports as balanced as per public accounts released in summer 2018.
- * Take measures to improve tax fairness and ensure the tax system reflects our commitment to work for all British Columbians, not just those at the top.
- * Create a Medical Service Plan task force and eliminate Medical Service Plan fees within four years, starting with a 50% reduction on January 1, 2018.
- * Eliminate tolls on the Port Mann and Golden Ears bridges.
- * Take measures to improve housing affordability, close real estate speculation loopholes, and reduce tax fraud and money laundering in the B.C. real estate marketplace.
- * Develop funding partnerships with the federal government, First Nations, municipalities, pension funds, financial institutions and businesses to invest in new capital infrastructure across the province over the next five years.
- * Increase the carbon tax by \$5 per tonne per year beginning April 1, 2018, take measures to expand the tax to fugitive emissions and slash-pile burning, and dedicate additional revenue to rebate cheques for families and investments in climate change solutions.
- * Enhance the lending capacity of B.C. credit unions by making their tax status permanent and lifting the cap on lending.

DOUG DONALDSON – Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development

- * Protect and create jobs by fighting for a fair deal for B.C. wood products in softwood lumber negotiations with the United States.
- * Work with communities and industry to develop a fair, lasting strategy to create more jobs by processing more logs in B.C. and to renew our forests by expanding investments in reforestation.
- * Expand our innovative wood-products sector by addressing regulatory and capital barriers hampering the growth of engineered wood production and work with other ministers to ensure public projects prioritize the use of B.C. wood.
- * Work with the Minister of Indigenous Relations, First Nations and communities to modernize land-use planning and sustainably manage B.C.'s ecosystems,

rivers, lakes, watersheds, forests and old growth.

- * Improve wildlife management and habitat conservation, and collaborate with stakeholders to develop long and short term strategies to manage B.C.'s wildlife resources.

ADRIAN DIX – Minister of Health

- * Prioritize the provision of team-based primary care by establishing urgent family-care centres across the province.
- * Improve rural health services and expand the medical travel allowance for those who must travel for care.
- * Work with the Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors to improve and strengthen services to ensure seniors receive dignified and quality care.
- * Invest in more paramedics.
- * Work to reduce wait times and implement province-wide co-ordination to manage and actively monitor waitlists.
- * Provide the Therapeutics Initiative with the resources it needs to do its job effectively.
- * Work with the federal government towards a national Pharmacare program and work with the B.C. Green caucus to develop a proposal to implement an essential drugs program.

SCOTT FRASER – Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

- * Work collaboratively and respectfully with First Nations to establish a clear, cross-government vision of reconciliation to guide the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and the Tsilhqot'in Supreme Court decision.
- * In partnership with First Nations, transform the treaty process so it respects case law and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- * Support Indigenous communities seeking to revitalize connections to their languages.
- * Provide reliable, dedicated funding and support for Friendship Centres.
- * With the Minister of Finance, negotiate with First Nations leadership and communities around expanding opportunities for their share of B.C.'s gaming industry.

BRUCE RALSTON – Minister of Jobs, Trade, and Technology

- * Establish B.C. as a preferred location for new and emerging technologies by supporting venture capital investment in B.C. startups, taking measures to increase the growth of domestic B.C. tech companies, and removing barriers to attracting and repatriating skilled workers.

continued on page 5

- * Ensure that the benefits of technology and innovation are felt around the province by working with rural and northern communities and equity-seeking groups to make strategic investments that support innovation and job growth.
- * Establish an Emerging Economy Task Force and establish an Innovation Commission to advocate for the technology sector.
- * Work with the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development to advocate for a fair deal for B.C. in softwood lumber negotiations with the United States, and to increase employment in the forestry and innovative wood manufacturing sectors.
- * Work with the Ministry of Finance to cut the small-business tax rate and create a Small Business Task Force.
- * Create a framework to promote local hiring on government projects.
- * Work with the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to improve credential assessments and create a centre to coordinate and educate newcomers in their fields.
- * Develop B.C.'s national and international trade relations.

GEORGE CHOW – Minister of State for Trade

- * Work across ministries and with the federal government to ensure British Columbia's interests are protected and advanced in trade negotiations and disputes.
- * Work across ministries and with the B.C. chapter of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association to further export opportunities for B.C. businesses.
- * Work with the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development to advocate for a fair deal for B.C. in softwood lumber negotiations with the United States.
- * Work with the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development, and with BC's forest industry to expand efforts to market innovative manufactured wood products to world markets.
- * Work with the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture to ensure that British Columbia's tourism sector is represented on trade missions.
- * Work with the Minister of Agriculture to advance B.C. food and agricultural exports, especially to growing markets in the Asia Pacific.
- * Work with the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to develop a multi-year growth strategy for expanding exports in the manufacturing sector.

HARRY BAINS – Labour

- * Establish a Fair Wage Commission to support the work of implementing the \$15-per-hour minimum wage by 2021 and to bring forward recommendations to close the gap between the minimum wage and livable wages. The commission will make its first report within 90 days of its first meeting.
- * Create a Temporary Foreign Worker registry to help protect vulnerable workers from exploitation and to track the use of temporary workers in our economy.
- * Update employment standards to reflect the changing nature of workplaces and ensure they are applied evenly and enforced.
- * Review and develop options with WorkSafe B.C. to increase compliance with employment laws and standards put in place to protect the lives and safety of workers.
- * Ensure British Columbians have the same rights and protections enjoyed by other Canadians by reviewing the Labour Code to ensure workplaces support a growing, sustainable economy with fair laws for workers and businesses.

JUDY DARCY – Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

- * Create a mental-health and addiction strategy to guide the transformation of B.C.'s mental-health-care system. As part of this strategy, include a focus on improving access, investing in early prevention and youth mental health.
- * Consult with internal and external stakeholders to determine the most effective way to deliver quality mental-health and addiction services.

SELINA ROBINSON – Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

- * Partner with local governments and First Nations to develop a community capital infrastructure fund to up grade and build sports facilities, playgrounds, local community centres, and arts and culture spaces.
- * Through partnerships with local governments, the federal government, and the private and not-for-profit sectors, begin to build 114,000 units of affordable market rental, non-profit, co-op, supported social housing and owner-purchase housing.
- * Create new student housing by removing unnecessary rules that prevent universities and colleges from building affordable student housing.
- * Amend the Residential Tenancy Act to provide stronger protections for renters, and provide additional resources to the Residential Tenancy Branch.
- * With the Minister of Finance, deliver an annual renter's rebate of \$400 dollars per rental household to improve rental affordability.

continued on page 6

- * Work in partnership to develop a homelessness action plan to reduce the homeless population through permanent housing and services. As part of the plan, conduct a province-wide homelessness count.
- * Work with the Minister of Finance to address speculation, tax fraud and money laundering in the housing market.
- * As the Minister responsible for TransLink, support the Mayors' Council 10-Year Vision for Metro Vancouver Transportation by funding 40% of the capital costs of every phase of the plan, in partnership with all levels of government.

MIKE FARNWORTH – Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

- * Provide more support to police efforts to disrupt the supply chain and advocate for increased penalties for drug dealers who knowingly distribute death-dealing drugs.
- * Take action on gang and gun violence.
- * Work in partnership to implement the Surrey Accord and provide the Surrey Wraparound (WRAP) program with increased, stable and secure annual funding.
- * Increase annual funding to support women who experience domestic violence, sexual assault and other crimes.
- * Work with First Nations to set targets and take action to reduce the numbers of Aboriginal people involved in the justice system.
- * Recognize culture for its role in rehabilitation and recovery and provide culturally diverse and appropriate programming in prisons, particularly for Aboriginal people.
- * Increase support for initiatives that are proven to prevent and reduce crime, and increase the use of restorative justice programs.
- * Lead the provincial government's planning for the safe implementation of legalized cannabis.

SHANE SIMPSON – Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

- * As a first step, immediately raise all income assistance and disability rates by \$100 per month.
- * Encourage and support assistance recipients as they re-enter the workforce by allowing them to keep an additional \$200 a month in earnings exemptions.
- * Further support those on disability assistance by fully restoring the BC Bus Pass program.
- * Develop a basic-income pilot to test whether giving people a basic income is an effective way to reduce poverty, improve health, housing and employment.
- * Design and implement a province-wide poverty-reduction strategy with legislated targets and timelines.

- * Work in partnership to develop a homelessness action plan to reduce the homeless population through permanent housing and services. As part of the plan, conduct a province-wide homelessness count.

LISA BEARE – Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture

- * Champion tourism as a job creator throughout British Columbia and work to expand tourism-marketing efforts internationally.
- * Work with the Minister of Jobs, Trade, and Technology to ensure that British Columbia's tourism sector is represented on trade missions.
- * Double the Province's investment in the B.C. Arts Council over four years.
- * Increase investments in Creative B.C. over four years.
- * Establish an arts infrastructure fund to help provide space for B.C. artists.
- * Ensure that B.C. film and TV makers get their fair share of federal investments from Telefilm, and other federal government programs.
- * Work with the Minister of Finance to expand B.C.'s film labour tax credit to include B.C. writers.
- * Work with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to develop a community capital infrastructure fund to upgrade and build sports facilities, play grounds, local community centres, and arts and culture spaces.

CLAIRE TREVANA – Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

- * Work with the Minister of Finance to eliminate tolls on the Port Mann and Golden Ears Bridges.
- * Accelerate Highway 1 upgrades to the Alberta border.
- * Work with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to secure federal funding for the Pattullo Bridge replacement and rapid transit in Metro Vancouver as part of implementing the mayor's 10-year plan for transit and transportation.
- * Work with B.C. Transit, the federal government, and local governments to fund transit improvements across the province, including improving HandyDART service
- * Work with B.C. Ferries to freeze and reduce fares, and reinstate the senior's weekday 100% discount, while conducting a comprehensive operating review.
- * Ensure that B.C. Ferries procurement practices for new ferries provide for a fair and competitive bidding process that is open to B.C. shipyards.
- * Work with the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to create a fair approach to ride-sharing. 