Ontario Onwards

Ontario's COVID-19 Action Plan for a People-Focused Government

Ontario

Contents

Minister's Introduction

From day one, as a government, we have recognized the need to meet the people of Ontario where they are to better serve them and their businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact Ontario, Canada and the world. Everyone has responded quickly to this unprecedented crisis and our government is no exception. We took immediate action to protect the people of Ontario and we continue to do what is necessary to help keep them healthy and safe.

Along the way, we've learned some valuable lessons about how government can work better for communities, for people and for their businesses. While we work diligently to ensure that the people of Ontario have continued access to the vital and critical services they rely on, we are also discovering new ways to connect people with them. Some of the most promising solutions came from secure digital technology, which met the public's needs with unprecedented speed and convenience.

For example:

- Since its launch, the Ontario Together procurement web portal has helped convert more than 19,000 leads for emergency supplies into purchases of more than $877 million in critical supplies for frontline staff. This includes more than 29 million gowns, more than 439 million gloves, 148 million masks and over 14 million face shields.

- A new website, Ontario.ca/COVID19, has been visited over 19 million times. The website is helping to ease public anxiety by providing access to clear, easy-to-understand guidance about COVID-19, including access to the self-assessment tool that has enabled over four million people to get evaluated for testing and directed to the nearest Assessment Centre.

- The COVID-19 exposure notification application was rapidly developed in partnership with the federal government and volunteers from Shopify and BlackBerry. Since its launch on July 31st, there have been over 4.5 million downloads.

While much of the work is underway and is successfully making the Ontario government more responsive to what people need, there is still more to do. This moment requires an ambitious agenda and our government will achieve that by moving **Ontario Onwards**.

The Action Plan is a roadmap to guide us and bring major change to government – both in terms of the services it delivers and how it delivers them. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this Action Plan includes more than 30 projects that will improve programs and support frontline government services, including health care, ServiceOntario and expanding access to broadband.

The world has changed, and government must change with it. That is why we are working to make Ontario's programs and frontline services more convenient, reliable and accessible. This Action Plan outlines our vision for how we'll achieve a modern, efficient and customer-focused government.

Peter Bethlenfalvy
President of the Treasury Board
Chair of the Future State Modernization Committee

Context and Mandate

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has moved quickly to adapt and update programs and services that the people of Ontario rely on. These events have made this work necessary and, as a result, this government is uniquely positioned to drive lasting change that will improve the way services are delivered for Ontarians.

This transformational process has created a foundation for the Future State Modernization Committee's work. This committee, chaired by Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, was established in May 2020 as part of the government's overall COVID-19 response with a mandate to improve service delivery for the people of Ontario. The committee will oversee the implementation of the Action Plan, as well as any future reforms.

The Action Plan outlines how the government will:

Make public sector services and service delivery modern and customer-focused	Make public sector digital- and data-driven and put data at the centre of government decision-making	Increase efficiency, effectiveness and speed of government operations and decisions

Focused on these goals, the government is acting without delay to implement a suite of transformative projects. These projects are informed by the best practices of visionary businesses, leading governments, think tanks, thought leaders, the Ontario Public Service, and the best advice from MPPs on behalf of their constituents.

Ontario's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that change can happen quickly when there is the need, the will and the dedication to see it through.

Through this Action Plan, we're adapting to changing circumstances and keeping the people of this province safe and healthy. We are also delivering services that are more convenient, more reliable and more accessible for the public.

Ontario

Action Plan

The Action Plan is an ambitious roadmap to improve the overall functioning of government at a rapid pace, based on lessons learned during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The vision of this roadmap is to make government services customer-focused, digital- and data-driven. In so doing, we'll also improve the speed of government operations and decision-making.

To accomplish these outcomes, the Action Plan includes more than 30 projects that will change the way people and businesses interact with government.

The projects are organized into four categories:

Making government services more digitally accessible

Reducing red tape and simplifying policies, while protecting public health and safety

Improving government purchasing

Creating more responsive and flexible public services

These projects were prioritized based on the need to bring government services to where people already live and conduct their business. And this is only the beginning. More projects will be announced over the coming weeks and months.

Making government services more digitally accessible

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that government is capable of quickly changing to engage with people and businesses through online channels to ensure physical distancing. For example, Ontario.ca/COVID19 has been visited over 19 million times and is a trusted source of information that provides the public with clear, easy-to-understand guidance.

The Action Plan will build on these advances to provide best-in-class, user-centric, secure digital solutions to the people and businesses of Ontario.

The goal is to make Ontario the most advanced digital jurisdiction in the world. To start down this path, the goals to be achieved over the next two years will include:

- 70 per cent of the services Ontarians use most, like enhanced virtual health care, are available online.
- 50 per cent of the most common ways the people of Ontario interact with government are completed digitally.
- 75 per cent of citizens and businesses are satisfied with Ontario's digital services, according to customer experience assessments.
- Digital capabilities and improvements across the Ontario Public Service are available on multiple platforms: online via Ontario.ca, in-person at ServiceOntario and through call centres.

With a focus on bringing more high-quality services online, Ontario is poised to be a best-in-class example, alongside other jurisdictions, like New South Wales in Australia, the UK and Estonia, that have made nearly all of their services available digitally. While we are becoming digital first, this does not mean that we are digital only. We will also retain existing channels for those who prefer them.

Our initial list of projects will help demonstrate tangible progress toward meeting these outcomes.

Projects

1. **Digital Identity**
   Verified, digital information about you, such as the information found on your health card, driver's licence and birth certificate, can be securely stored in a digital wallet on your smartphone and conveniently used to prove your identity to access services when required.

2. **Digital First for Health**
   Provide new and improved digital health solutions to frontline care personnel, so they can rapidly and securely access a patient's health records from anywhere and from any device.

3. **Improve Access to Broadband and Cellular Services**
   Make it easier for communities in areas of need to access internet and cellular services by expanding broadband services across Ontario.

4. **Proposing a Virtual Learning Strategy for Training and Post-Secondary Education**
   Improve access to high-quality post-secondary education and retraining opportunities by establishing a virtual learning strategy that focuses on enhancing the sector's capacity to deliver high-quality, accessible online learning experiences to students in Canada and global markets.

5. **ServiceOntario Enhancements**
   Provide easier access to ServiceOntario to improve customers' online experience for the highest-volume transactions, such as licence plate stickers, health cards and driver's licences.

6. **Criminal Justice Digital Design**
   The criminal justice system relies heavily on paper to move cases forward. By digitally connecting police, Crown attorneys, courts and corrections partners, we can enable the real-time flow of data, documents and media so that the right information is in the right hands faster.

7. **Moving Justice Forward Strategy**
   Build a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system during COVID-19 and beyond. To this end, the Ministry of the Attorney General is establishing new and innovative ways of delivering services remotely, in-person and online, such as an online jury pre-screening and check-in tool.

8. **Transportation Services Enhancements**
   Improve safety for travelers, provide access to critical information and improve customer experience. For example, the new 511 app provides truck drivers with immediate access to the necessary information to stay safe, including locations of food and rest stops, while transporting essential goods across Ontario.

9. **Ontario.ca Enhancements**
   Establish Ontario.ca as the one consistent, seamless government website for everything you need to do online. For example, a new voluntary interactive screening tool is now available on Ontario.ca to assist parents, students and staff with the daily assessment of COVID-19 symptoms and risk factors that is required before attending school.

10. **Digital Maturity Model**
    Establish a clear vision for public service delivery in the digital age to help Ontario identify high demand services and programs that could be delivered online and measure progress towards becoming the most digitally advanced jurisdiction in the world.

11. **Transfer Payment Consolidation**
    Expedite the shift to an efficient, transparent, accountable and coordinated approach to administering government transfer payments to service providers, like municipalities and non-profit organizations, using a standard online model. This approach will make the system more efficient, reduce costs and make it easier to deliver services that people rely on every day.

Meet Johnny

Johnny wants to apply for a government service on Ontario.ca. He learns that instead of coming into a government office to show his ID, he can download a digital wallet app and apply for the service online. The app helps him validate his identity using the information on his driver's licence and health card and creates a digital version of his identity that can be used wherever a website or service is set up to accept it. On the Ontario.ca website where he is asked to enter personal information (e.g., name, date of birth), he uses his digital wallet to do this securely using his digital identity. Johnny grants the app consent to access his digital identity and his digital wallet shares only the necessary personal information with the government website, populating the application without a trip to an office. From now on Johnny can use this digital wallet any time an appropriately enabled service needs to verify these facts about him. Not just online, but in an office or from his mobile phone. The service is more efficient, and his personal information is fully protected.

Meet Sophia

Sophia is one of 1.4 million Ontarians who lack access to broadband services that meet the minimum service standard set out by the federal government. Sophia is also working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and struggles to connect to the online world. She'd like to improve the speed of her connection, but the infrastructure to do so doesn't exist in her area. Through a new provincial investment program, Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON), the government is increasing the percentage of Ontarians with access to quality and reliable broadband and cellular services that meet national standards. This means Sophia will have the internet access she needs, when and where she needs it.

Reducing red tape and simplifying policies, while protecting public health and safety

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to move quickly in response, has made it easier to identify which regulations and processes are essential, and which are unnecessary red tape preventing government from moving more effectively and efficiently. Based on what we've learned, the Action Plan will simplify processes and policies to make life easier for the people and businesses of Ontario while ensuring appropriate protections are in place. This will save businesses money, while letting them spend more time on their business and less time on unnecessary paperwork.

Projects

1. **Development and Construction Approvals**
    Getting shovels in the ground faster on transit and housing projects by further reducing barriers to development and construction approvals through digital application processes, instituting minimum service standards and undertaking a review to find ways to simplify the process, while protecting the environment.

2. **Compliance Modernization: Making Regulation Smarter**
    Help businesses understand and comply with regulations and streamline regulatory enforcement. Coordinate all inspectors' visits to a factory or worksite in the most efficient manner possible and consolidate the number of visits, instead of subjecting businesses to multiple, uncoordinated days of inspections that slow productivity.

3. **Reduce Red Tape**
    Untangle Ontario's permitting requirements by eliminating duplication between ministries as well as with other levels of government and increasing predictability for approvals for business while ensuring the protection of the environment and public health and safety.

4. **Pharmacists**
    Allow pharmacists to prescribe certain medications for certain minor ailments.

5. **Offsetting Requirements**
    Currently, the government is required to offset every $1 of businesses' administrative costs by $1.25 in savings. A review of this existing offsetting requirement is underway to further reduce undue burdens on businesses.

6. **Regulatory Impact Assessment**
    Publish Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) publicly to increase government transparency and receive feedback from business owners and the public. The RIA is a cost-benefit document that ministries prepare when proposing new requirements for business.

7. **Burden Reduction Directive**
    Establish a Burden Reduction Directive to make sure that government follows mandatory red tape reduction rules and goals.

8. **Invest Ontario Agency**
    Accelerate economic recovery by creating Invest Ontario agency that will include greater business development and deal structuring expertise and build on the many benefits of investing in Ontario.

9. **Doing Business in Ontario**
    Make it easier to do business in Ontario by aligning regulatory policies to those of other leading jurisdictions.

Meet Liam

Liam is a small business owner, frustrated with the number of hoops he needs to jump through to maintain and expand his business. He has also had to halt services multiple times a year for various inspections. Now that the government is streamlining regulatory enforcement, Liam will be able to run his company with fewer interruptions, all while maintaining the same health and safety standards the people of Ontario expect.

Improving government purchasing

The Ontario government's challenges sourcing critical supplies and equipment, including personal protective equipment (PPE), during the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the need to improve our current approach to procurement. Circumstances have shown that we need reliable, domestically-produced supplies to ensure a continuity of services when global supply chains are constrained, so Ontarians can have the supplies they need when they need them. The Action Plan will accelerate the work of transforming how the Ontario government purchases goods and services. It will leverage the combined bulk-buying power of the province while taking advantage of the world-class capabilities of local Ontario businesses. This approach will lead to greater job creation and economic growth, while showing respect for taxpayer dollars.

The goals include:

- Saving Ontarians money by sourcing high-quality goods at a scale that serves the public interest in a financially responsible way.

- Stabilizing access to a high-quality supply of critical products.

- Stimulating job creation and economic growth by producing goods right here in Ontario.

- Taking advantage of emerging technologies, removing barriers, and connecting small businesses and entrepreneurs to government and its customers.

Project

1. **Centralizing Procurement**
   Advancing efforts to transform and further modernize procurement across government will allow the province to leverage bulk-buying power and save money.

Meet William and Kristen

William works in a hospital that needs to buy more personal protective equipment (PPE). Kristen works in a nearby school board that needs to buy the same PPE. By combining their purchasing processes, Kristen and William are both able to acquire cost-effective PPE. With their combined bid, they can now enter a new pricing category for higher quantities and reduce the price per person. They now have the safety equipment they need, when they need it at a savings to taxpayers.

Creating more responsive and flexible public services

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the need for the Ontario Public Service and the Broader Public Sector to revisit how they serve the people of the province. The province can make a real difference in the quality of service it provides to Ontarians – by recruiting and retaining the best people and giving them the skills and tools they need. This includes applying lean principles to ensure that work on the frontlines, and behind the scenes, brings value to the people of Ontario and to our workers.

The goal will be making government processes faster and more efficient, such as redesigning complicated, confusing forms or getting an application approved. For example, an additional 1,800 people a day can now receive licence plate stickers when renewing online at ServiceOntario, a 29 per cent jump since July 2020.

Projects

1. **Workforce Data**
   Expand the collection of provincial public sector workforce data to increase transparency and accountability, and make more effective use of public resources.

2. **Core Internal Processes**
   Re-design core processes, such as approvals for program or permit applications, so citizens can get what they need faster and easier.

3. **Lean Executive Sponsor Program**
   Make the Ontario Public Service more agile by supporting new ways of working and improving everyday services, such as getting a driver's licence, by ensuring public service executives provide dedicated support to champion and drive improvement projects that speed up and simplify the delivery of critical government services.

4. **Regulations and Legislation at our Fingertips**
   Improve access to the latest policies and regulations by looking at
   new ways to improve collaboration, ensuring e-data is at the heart of
   decisions, and making it easier to integrate impacted parties.

5. **Talent Management**
   Bring together talent management processes (source, assess,
   develop, deploy) with their shared pool of talent expertise, to provide
   one-window access for clients and employees. This will leverage
   simple, agile and nimble decision-making to set priorities and allocate
   resources. It will also lead to more timely talent decisions, more
   employees with critical business skills and a more qualified and
   diverse workforce across the entire Ontario Public Service.

Meet Tanisha

Tanisha does shift work as a medical professional
and finds it difficult to get away to renew her
Accessible Parking Permit. When she does find
the time, she needs the process to be quick and
easy. Because of productivity improvements
made inside government through the utilization
of lean process management, Tanisha is now
one of 200 more people every day having their
Accessible Parking Permit processed. That means
that she is getting the services she needs faster. By reducing lead times
and eliminating backlogs, these types of changes often result in a 20 per
cent improvement in productivity and better customer service, saving staff
time and costs. By using tools like lean to continually pursue improvements
across government, more people like Tanisha and the rest of Ontario will be
able to get what they want, when they want it, correctly – the first time.

Other projects

In addition to the four main pillars of the Action Plan, the government has developed the following projects:

Contact Centres

- Make it easier for people to interact with government by offering more services digitally, such as an online chat window, and improving call centres across the Ontario Public Service.

Real Estate and Capital Assets

- Maximize the value of the government's real estate portfolio to achieve the best value for taxpayer money.
- Improve infrastructure planning, using an evidence-based, best-practices approach to inform public infrastructure spending decisions in a coordinated and cost-effective way.
- Improve how space is used in government-owned buildings.
- Streamline government processes by centralizing the management of government office space.

Organization

- Improve customer experience by reviewing government agencies for efficiency and effectiveness, with a focus on providing virtual and online services. Develop support programs and services that are more responsive to the needs of people's businesses.

Infrastructure

- Improve infrastructure planning and enable data-driven decision-making using new technologies, including the creation of digital infrastructure replicas and modelling.

Conclusion

The world has changed and the government must change with it. We continue to improve services for the people and businesses of Ontario as we move these projects forward. That's why we've moved quickly, adapting and updating Ontario's programs and services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This work has helped keep the people of Ontario safe, but there is still more to do.

This Action Plan is our vision for how government will work for the people of our province. It's a vision that continues to evolve as we navigate the impacts of COVID-19 and the needs of Ontarians, both today and for years to come.

While the initial work of the Action Plan spans over 30 projects, our efforts are organized around four key outcomes:

1. Making government services more digitally accessible
2. Reducing red tape and simplifying policies, while protecting public health and safety
3. Improving government purchasing
4. Creating more responsive and flexible public services

This Action Plan is a long-term program for transformational change that involves all ministries across government. As our work progresses, projects and details will evolve to support our modernization efforts, and we will develop new projects as well. Every step forward will create more convenient, reliable and accessible services for the people and businesses of Ontario, moving **Ontario Onwards**.

Ontario Onwards

Ontario's COVID-19 Action Plan for a People-Focused Government

Ontario