



ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The McGuinty government is committed to building stronger, more positive relationships with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Ontario. Its goal is to create economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for young and growing Aboriginal populations.

2010 Ontario Budget

The province is creating jobs, improving social conditions and promoting economic sustainability for Aboriginal Peoples in Ontario.

Initiatives announced in the 2010 Ontario Budget include providing \$45 million over three years for a new project-based skills training program to help Aboriginal Peoples and northern Ontarians participate in and benefit from emerging economic development opportunities. This includes the Ring of Fire – an area of Ontario's Far North with potentially large deposits of minerals such as chromite, nickel, copper and platinum.

The program will also help develop capacity in the North to undertake base mapping, develop resource inventories and gather other information to support community-based land-use planning and environmentally sustainable development that benefits Aboriginal Peoples, northern Ontarians and Ontario as a whole.

The government will also appoint a Ring of Fire Coordinator to work and consult with Aboriginal Peoples, northern Ontarians and the mining community to encourage responsible and sustainable economic development related to the Ring of Fire. For more information, see Backgrounder: [Creating Jobs through New Investments in Postsecondary Education and Northern Ontario](#).

The province continues to call on the federal government to work with Ontario and First Nations to determine a mutually agreeable method of administering a point-of-sale exemption under the Harmonized Sales Tax that best corresponds to Ontario's current administrative approach under the Retail Sales Tax.

Recent Achievements

The province invests about \$600 million annually in programs and services for Aboriginal Peoples through various ministries across the Ontario government. This includes investments in children and social services, health care services, justice and policing initiatives, and education and training programs.

Recent initiatives include:

- Approving a new agreement between the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation and the Chippewas of Mnjikaning First Nation (Rama) to secure the continued operation of Casino Rama in Rama First Nation. The 20-year agreement, which takes effect August 1, 2011, provides additional financial benefits and opportunities for development for Rama First Nation, including one-time funding of \$2.3 million for a new training and development centre. With more than 500 Aboriginal employees, Casino Rama is the largest single-site employer of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada
- Launching the \$250 million Aboriginal Loan Guarantee Program (ALGP) to support Aboriginal equity participation in renewable green energy and transmission infrastructure projects. A complementary Aboriginal Energy Partnership Program will help develop community energy plans, fund feasibility studies and develop an Aboriginal Renewable Energy Network
 - The ALGP is now fully operational and supports incentives in the Ontario Power Authority's feed-in tariff program for renewable energy that encourages partnerships with local Aboriginal communities
- Providing \$15 million over two years for sports and recreation infrastructure projects in approximately 40 communities
- Proceeding with an Aboriginal procurement program to ensure that Aboriginal businesses have greater opportunities for doing business with the province
- In the spirit of building a better working relationship, co-hosting the first ever Ontario First Nations Economic Forum on January 14-15, 2010, at the Fort William First Nation Reserve, to assist First Nations economic development. All parties, including the federal government and other First Nations leaders, are committed to maintaining an economic development forum to establish a coordinated approach to building more sustainable economies for First Nations across Ontario
- Hosting the Working Relationships: Principles and Practices Forum on consultation and accommodation best practices with government, industry and First Nations in the spring of 2009
- Building and enhancing existing relationship agreements and creating new agreements and tables with Aboriginal communities, including:
 - The Anishinabek Nation Bilateral Roundtable and a Letter of Intent with the Grand Council of Treaty #3
 - Continuing discussions with Nishnawbe Aski Nation on a number of issues through a formal table process
 - Signing a political accord with Six Nations
 - Working with the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians on an Accord Relationship
 - Signing a Framework Agreement with the Métis Nation of Ontario. The intent of this agreement is to work together to improve the well-being of children, families and communities while protecting and promoting the distinct culture, identity and heritage of the Métis people
- Taking the leadership on a new Provincial-Territorial Aboriginal process that includes a working group, which will report to the Council of the Federation in August 2010. These are the first meetings since 2005
- Working in partnership with the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services Corporation and Miziwe Biik Development Corporation to support an \$80 million housing program for Aboriginal families living off-reserve
- Creating a new student bursary program to help Aboriginal students in financial need attend college, university or Aboriginal postsecondary institutions in Ontario.

In addition, the Ontario government, together with its Aboriginal partners, continues to work on several multi-year strategic initiatives, including building partnerships that enhance economic development. These include:

New Relationship Fund

Launched in December 2008, the New Relationship Fund helps First Nations communities and Métis organizations develop the resources, capacity and skills necessary to enhance and improve business and economic-development partnership opportunities. About 250 projects involving First Nations communities, Métis communities and urban Aboriginal organizations have received funding under the New Relationship Fund. Through the 2010 Budget, the government is annualizing this funding and will provide approximately \$60 million over the next four years.

Land Claims

In August 2009, the Province signed a landmark Framework Agreement with the Algonquins and Canada, and opened a land claim consultation office.

Over the past year, 10 more land claims were removed from the land claim backlog, and Ontario is on target to eliminate much of the backlog by 2011.

In August 2009, Ontario signed an Agreement in Principle with the Pays Plat First Nation and the federal government.

Modernization of Ontario's Mining Act

The Mining Amendment Act, 2009 includes a number of progressive provisions that respond to the concerns of First Nations and Métis communities while promoting balanced, sustainable development and a vibrant industry. Broad-based consultations on the regulations are currently underway.

Resource-Benefits Sharing

In April 2009, the Ontario government reaffirmed its commitment to resource-benefits sharing with Aboriginal communities by setting aside \$30 million towards this initiative. The Ontario government is working with Aboriginal communities province-wide to discuss the potential elements of a plan for resource-benefits sharing.

Resource-benefits sharing is a way to include Aboriginal communities in the benefits of natural resource development. It is designed to encourage skills training, job creation and economic development opportunities for Aboriginal communities, and promote economic spin-offs that will benefit regional economies and Ontario as a whole.

Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee

On March 1, 2010, the government began moving to deregulate Ipperwash Provincial Park so that the land can be transferred to the federal government, a step closer to returning the land to the Chippewas of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. This transfer will bring important social and economic benefits to this First Nation community.

Assessment and implementation of the Ipperwash Inquiry Report's recommendations will continue, including the First Nations policing review.

Far North Planning Initiative

The government is working with First Nations communities on a land-use planning process to promote environmentally sustainable development and protection of 50 per cent of Ontario's northern Boreal forest.

The planning process for the Far North enshrines a new respect and working relationship with First Nations through land-use planning. Community-based land-use plans will be led by local First Nations, working jointly with the Ministry of Natural Resources, and plans will require the agreement of local First Nations. Land-use planning gives First Nations a greater say in the future of their communities and will balance the social, environmental and economic interests of First Nations and Ontario.

In 2008, the government committed \$30 million over four years to support this plan and build capacity for Far North First Nations.

Growth Plan for Northern Ontario

In October 2009, the government released a proposed 25-year Growth Plan for Northern Ontario for public review and comment. A key priority of the proposed plan is to work with Aboriginal Peoples to increase participation in the future economic growth of northern Ontario and to achieve better health status for Aboriginal communities. This builds on more than three years of dialogue with Aboriginal Peoples, northerners and other key partners.

Achievements Since 2003

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has introduced a number of other targeted initiatives to support economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for Aboriginal communities. These include:

- Signing a historic \$3 billion Gaming Revenue Sharing and Financial Agreement, announced in 2008, which provides a stable revenue source to First Nations to invest in education, health, economic, community and social development
- \$19 million to fund community and business-related projects through the Aboriginal Community Capital Grants program, which helps improve social infrastructure in communities and provides a better environment for business and industry
- More than \$33.5 million to Aboriginal communities through Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation programs
- \$6 million annually to the Akwe:go and Wasa-Nabin programs to provide at-risk urban Aboriginal children and their families with culturally relevant and community-based supports
- Providing an endowment of \$3 million to the Council of Ontario Universities to support the creation of a Research chair in Métis Studies, in cooperation with the Métis Nation of Ontario. The Chair will undertake research to create a greater understanding of the Métis people in Ontario
- \$1.5 million, to be matched by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, to establish a Research Chair in Aboriginal and Rural Health at the northern Ontario School of Medicine
- A First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework to give Aboriginal children and youth a chance at a brighter and more promising future

- Passing legislation in May 2008 to establish Algoma University as an independent, degree-granting university. Algoma now has greater independence to focus on the postsecondary needs of the North and the significant population of Aboriginal students it serves.