Media Release  
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CITY OF NORTH BAY FIGHTS TO PROTECT ONTERA JOBS

North Bay, Ontario: On March 23, 2012 the Government of Ontario announced they were divesting the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission and all its divisions. I told them then that the divestiture was a bad idea and wrong for the North. I rallied my colleagues from across the north to work together for the common good. The ONTC has been, and remains, an integral part of Northern Ontario and vitally important to the economies of many communities.

The announcement of job cuts at Ontera is shocking yet sadly not unexpected.

Yesterday I spoke with our MP, Jay Aspin, our MPP, Vic Fedeli, several area Mayors, union leadership, and today spoke with Minister Gravelle in regards to the job cuts at Ontera. The Government told us earlier this year that there would be a loss of 20 to 30 jobs and they would protect the remaining jobs for 2 years. Now we find out 50 percent of the workforce will be gone in 13 months, not 2 years, with 60 jobs lost not 20 to 30 positions.

The loss of high-skilled, well-paying jobs across the north is no small matter. I told the Minister his decision to sell Ontera would result in job losses. The details of the transaction really give it the appearance of a fire sale, even worse, more like, please take it and we will pay you millions of dollars to take it off our hands. We have pointed out the Government’s own findings reveal any divestiture of ONTC assets will be costly for the taxpayer. We were right, in excess of 50 million dollars.

We need long-term planning in regard to the ONTC. We need a strategic long-term approach; a strategic alliance with Metrolinx; a clear direction in regard to the ONTC’s role in the Ring of Fire, and concrete plans for investments for the organization.

Once again, I am calling on my peers across the north and our elected Provincial and Federal representatives to come together. These job cuts are a travesty and will have a devastating impact on local economies. I am prepared to see what, if any, options exist with the governing regulatory bodies and I am prepared to continue to fight for the ONTC and all its employees.
I warned the government that not seeking protection for workers would result in job losses and I was right. This government has given Ontera away. This will cost taxpayers millions, but the real cost is the cost of the jobs and the long-term implications of these job losses across the North.

- 30 –

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