

April 15, 2021

The Honourable John Abbott
Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development
Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities
Minister Responsible for the Community Sector
Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

Dear Minister Abbott:

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Minister Responsible for the Community Sector, and Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. As part of this Cabinet, you are working on behalf of, and alongside, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to face the challenges confronting our province while preparing for the great opportunities ahead. I have confidence in our Government and in this province. This is the right team at the right time.

Together, we will deliver on our promises to the people of this province. Together, we will promote a healthy Newfoundland and Labrador, drive meaningful economic opportunities, foster inclusive population growth, modernize education and childcare, and build strong partnerships. We will realize our vision of a prosperous and fiscally responsible province that is inclusive and welcoming to people from all over the world.

As Minister, you will take a lead in building a prosperous future for this province. You will foster strong relationships with Indigenous governments and organizations and with relevant stakeholder groups. Each relationship must be founded upon respect and mutual understanding.

Now is the time to take meaningful steps on the path to prosperity, and decisive action to build a solid foundation for future generations. I am asking you to work with your Cabinet colleagues and with all Members of the House of Assembly to advance the following priorities.

As Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, you will lead a review of existing government measures to address poverty, including measures to address housing and food insecurity, and lead the development of a renewed poverty reduction strategy in consultation with stakeholders, experts and community leaders. To address food security, you will work with the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to meet the goal of increasing food security to 20 percent by 2022.

You will also work toward the development of an action plan that will coordinate government efforts, focus on community partnerships, and identify opportunities to improve outcomes for all children and youth so they can develop to their full potential. This will include supporting vulnerable families to help prevent the need for involvement in the child protection system, and reviewing the system of children in care. In this role, you will also oversee the continued implementation of the new Children, Youth and Families Act. I task you to address issues important to the health and well-being of children and youth in our province and, in particular, as identified by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

You will collaborate with your Cabinet colleagues, including the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, the Nunatsiavut Government, and other community partners to address the recommendations of the Independent Review of Child Protection Services to Inuit Children in Newfoundland and Labrador to improve outcomes for Inuit children, youth and their families. In keeping with the memorandum of understanding signed between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Innu leadership, you will participate in the forthcoming inquiry into the treatment, experiences and outcomes of Innu in the child protection system. This work will be done in collaboration with the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and the Government of Canada.

To support seniors across the province, you will work with your Cabinet colleagues, care providers, community groups and educational institutions, and lead the development of an intergenerational program guide to aid increased interaction between youth and older adults across Newfoundland and Labrador. I task you to address issues important to seniors throughout the province and, in particular, as identified by the Seniors' Advocate. In addition, you will finalize the review of the Adult Protection Act to consider areas that may require amendment and continue to promote the Age Friendly Communities Program to assist communities planning for population aging.

Your new portfolio will include the provision of income support and basic benefits to those in need. I ask you to enhance program integrity measures under the income support program, including increased frequency of client file reviews. Provide opportunities for income support clients with moderate barriers to employment to transition into the workforce and achieve full attachment or re-attachment. Please review program and service delivery models for income support to ensure continuous improvement.

I ask that you support the Minister of Health and Community Services to reinvest identified savings from value-based healthcare into areas that will improve the social determinants of health and wellness of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This will involve consultation with Health Accord NL, community stakeholders, healthcare providers, and patients with lived experience.

As Minister Responsible for the Community Sector, you will work with your Cabinet colleagues to support volunteer and non-profit organizations. In collaboration with the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, the community sector, stakeholders and leading incubators across Canada you will lead the establishment of an incubator and accelerator. This will help create the social infrastructure that will allow our community organizations to grow and to maximize the sector's social and economic impacts across the province.

As Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, you will work in partnership with your Cabinet colleagues, the Minister of Digital Government and ServiceNL, and stakeholders to lead the development of provincial accessibility legislation to help ensure inclusion and equity for all persons in Newfoundland and Labrador. Please continue to engage, support, and partner with the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL, and work with stakeholders to ensure equitable access to services and opportunities for people with disabilities. Ensure that all policy and legislative work is grounded in the principle of "nothing about us without us". Please continue work to establish an Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, continue working with other ministers, community stakeholders and individuals experiencing housing insecurity, to develop a comprehensive provincial Housing and Homelessness Plan to help address the social systemic barriers related to homelessness. You will also continue working closely with our community partners to help improve access to affordable housing, including investments in modernizing or renovating public housing units, and delivering the Home Energy Savings Program in collaboration with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to help make homes more energy efficient and fight climate change.

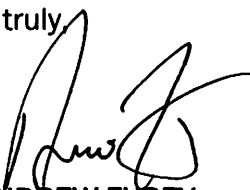
We will always remain focused on a robust economy where there is a place for all workers, and an economy that embraces renewable energy while maximizing our oil and gas advantage. We will foster a business environment that supports new and growing technology and we will reimagine and reinvigorate our fishing and mining sectors to meet global demand for our abundant resources.

As we work to build a strong economy, we must also work to create a prosperous society. We envision a province with healthy, active residents who not only have access to the means to treat illness but also to achieve wellness. We envision a province with vibrant, engaged communities in which nobody is left behind. We must ensure that in our quest to build economic wealth we also build social and cultural wealth.

Our Government must always be mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable in our society and must ensure that quality social services are available and accessible to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. To ensure our Government is meeting this need, a Gender-Based Plus Analysis must be integrated into all policies and proposals.

I call on you and every other Newfoundlander and Labradorian to join me in my commitment to make a difference for our province. Together, we will harness our collective strengths and build a better and brighter future for this province.

Yours truly,



DR. ANDREW FUREY
Premier