September 15, 2020

The Honourable John Haggie
Minister of Health and Community Services

Dear Minister Haggie:

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Health and Community Services. As you advance activities in the interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am confident that you will support better health services and outcomes for the people of this province, including modernization of our mental health and addictions system and expansion of primary health care. Your department is vital in ensuring the health and well-being of all residents at all times and, in particular, during public health emergencies.

This year has been marked by economic and social turmoil not only in Newfoundland and Labrador but around the world. But with great challenges come great opportunities. Through focused efforts I know that we will overcome these challenges and emerge as a stronger, more caring, more compassionate, and more diverse province. Future generations will judge us not based on the size of the challenges we faced but on how we have solidified the financial, social, and economic foundation of our province. Our Government has a responsibility to respond swiftly, decisively, and effectively. The time for action is now.

The economic status quo is no longer acceptable. We need to move away from the well-worn economic cycles of boom and bust and foster an economy that is diversified and sustainable. We need to reinvigorate our economy to harness the great potential that lies in our technology sector, our world-class arts sector, and every other sector from oil and gas to tourism, from fisheries and aquaculture to forestry and agrifoods. I know that the people of our province work hard in these and other sectors and the Government must work equally as hard for the people.

Our work to create a robust, stable economy will provide a firm foundation to ensure the delivery of vital social and other services to residents of the province. 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.

The business of government must also advance from the status quo. We need to reimagine how government works so that it works for the people. This change is long overdue and it will be transformational.
In particular, I am tasking you to work with your colleagues in Cabinet, with all members of the House of Assembly, and with your departmental officials to advance the following priorities.

Strike a Task Force on Health Care in our province focused on delivering a 10-Year Health Accord with all stakeholders. We must work to find ways to reduce health system costs and eliminate waste while improving services to meet the health services needs of individuals, families, and communities. You will commit to invest in a Health in All Policies approach to ensure all sectors are mindful of the influence that their activities have on the health and well-being of our province and its citizens. This will involve supporting Government decision-making by ensuring that the full impact of a decision on the health and well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is understood by our government before we make changes to legislation, programs, or services. This includes services that disproportionately impact the health and well-being of women, including fertility and breast screening services.

Continue your work to ensure the health system is ready to respond quickly and effectively to any future resurgence of COVID-19 and to reduce disruptions to the delivery of other health services caused by the public health emergency. This includes supporting the ongoing work and engagement set out by the Vulnerable Populations Working Group.

Drive innovation, efficiency, and patient care by moving towards a digitized health care system, including making advancements in eHealth. This includes continuing to build our highly-integrated electronic health record so that all patient health information is available to providers in one place and expanding virtual care services so people can access their health care providers without having to leave their community. I also ask that you continue to engage with regional health authorities regarding the expansion of midwifery services. Continue to enhance home-based supports for people with complex care needs, such as individuals living with dementia or needing palliative care.

As part of our Government’s commitment to wellness, you will also be responsible for increased public health promotion, awareness, education, and prevention measures in areas such as youth vaping and smoking cessation, chronic disease management, breastfeeding, and healthy eating. Please pilot the new draft school food guidelines in the 2020-21 year and prepare for full implementation in the 2021-22 school year.

In collaboration with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, partner with the private sector to design, build, finance, and maintain new health care facilities in an effort to increase access to critical health care services while maximizing value for taxpayers.

Implement Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System for Newfoundland and Labrador, including ensuring that the voice of lived experience is heard in all our work through the support of our Recovery Council, composed solely of individuals with lived experience and family members.
I ask you to provide guidance with regard to health workforce development, in such areas as improving the scope of practice for health care providers, increasing the number of nurse practitioners providing care in our communities, and filling vacant positions in the regional health authorities. We must ensure family practitioners are supported with a collaborative health team approach.

In collaboration with the Minister of Education, improve access to Practical Nursing and Personal Care Attendant programs and continue to provide bursaries to students actively enrolled in these programs in exchange for a two-year service commitment in selected, difficult-to-fill positions. Enhance the use of paramedics and advanced care paramedics in communities throughout the province. Work with the Minister of Education to implement an Advanced Care Paramedic Training program.

I trust that you will be collaborative, honest, respectful, and transparent in your role as a minister. I also expect that you will hold yourself to the highest standards of ethical conduct and act at all times with integrity. Individually and collectively, we have a responsibility to seek out the best advice and the best ideas and to implement actions only in the interests of the people of our great province. We must be guided by evidence and research and take into account diverse perspectives as we make our decisions.

We cannot change our past but we can shape our future. It is our job to build the bright future that our province and its people deserve.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

DR. ANDREW FUREY
Premier