

December 14, 2015

Honourable John Haggie  
Minister of Health and Community Services

Dear Minister Haggie:

I am honoured to welcome you to your role as Minister of Health and Community Services. We have been given an extraordinary opportunity to serve the people of our province and together we will work to create a stronger tomorrow for Newfoundland and Labrador. Over the next four years, we will fulfill our commitments, building on the trust placed in us on November 30, 2015. We shall, without fail, act with integrity in all aspects of our service, striving for excellence in discharging our responsibilities.

Embarking on this journey together, we will be guided by *A Stronger Tomorrow: Our Five Point Plan* to Restore Openness, Transparency and Accountability; Build a Stronger, Smarter Economy; Improve Health and Healthcare; Support Safe and Sustainable Communities; and Invest in Our Future Through Education.

As Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador I expect you to follow the principles of openness, transparency and accountability. It is my intention to ensure policy decisions in government are informed by research, evidence, and evaluation so that citizens can understand how and why decisions are made. It is critical that our government's decisions are also informed by engagement with stakeholders, including our Aboriginal partners, to ensure everyone's voices are heard.

Our government is committed to modernizing our province's legislative process in accordance with these principles and I call upon you to engage your fellow Members, constituents and the general public; avail of the Committee process of the House of Assembly; and seek opportunities for non-partisan cooperation.

We are also committed to creating an environment that captures the full potential of our province's many riches, through diversification, job creation and growth. We will take action to improve the health and well-being of people, empower sustainable community development, protect public safety and advance educational opportunities and outcomes.

Our province is facing significant fiscal challenges that require our collective leadership and the engagement of the public. Together, our government will lead our province towards a more sustainable, economic future.

Health care touches all residents, regardless of where they live. As Minister of Health and Community Services, I expect you to ensure that our government, through the regional health authorities and policy and standards development, offers accessible and quality care to residents. The system must be cost-effective, responsive and efficient, and improve the health and well-being of residents. I expect you to oversee this broad mandate and to implement the specific items outlined below.

### **Primary Health Care**

Improving health outcomes in our province starts by embracing a holistic concept of health. It requires a greater focus on primary healthcare as a philosophy and a service delivery model. I expect you to work with primary care stakeholders to develop regional primary healthcare teams to provide better care and help address recruitment and retention of family physicians, nurses, and other health care providers who want to work in this environment.

### **Health Care Management**

A priority of our government is to improve the responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency of the healthcare system. You must conduct a thorough review of health outcomes in all areas of the province's health system and set meaningful and measurable goals for future improvements. I expect you to: provide support to the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI) to continue with the implementation of the Electronic Health Record including consultation with NLCHI and the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association on full implementation of the electronic medical records program; support NLCHI to expand its data collection and analysis of the healthcare system and identify new health information systems to improve patient care; and, support a cardiovascular Centre of Excellence, including improving diagnostic services and timelines to reduce waitlists for detection and diagnosis of cardiovascular disease.

### **Health Promotion and Healthy Living**

Our province has some of the highest rates of chronic disease among provinces. Working with your colleagues, I expect you to work to lower the rate of chronic diseases through a health promotion and healthy living strategy being developed in collaboration with the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, which will include investment in health promotion, healthy living programs and early intervention. This strategy will require collaboration across portfolios, and will reduce acute healthcare costs in the longer term and help to achieve a healthy population in the province. This comprehensive plan will include measurable goals and milestones and a strong emphasis on public reporting and accountability. The plan will focus on chronic disease prevention and management program and an innovative youth wellness program.

More specifically, with respect to chronic disease prevention, I expect that this strategy will: enhance early detection, screening and treatment by primary healthcare teams; implement a diabetes prevention and management program starting with the establishment of a province-wide diabetes database to support evidence-based decision making; require regional health authorities to measure the health indicators of people in their regions and report on these indicators to government; and, improve diagnostic services and timelines to reduce waitlists for detection and diagnosis of cardiovascular disease.

On the matter of youth wellness, I expect that under this strategy you will work with your Cabinet colleagues to: establish health risk assessments in schools beginning with Kindergarten children; provide support to children with autism beyond grade three through Applied Behaviour Analysis; and, establish regional adolescent health clinics that offer preventative care services, sexually transmitted infections testing, treatment for acute health issues, and counselling in such areas as bullying, sexual orientation, eating disorders, and unhealthy relationships.

### **Scope of Practice**

Allowing healthcare professionals to work to their full scope of practice provides an optimal opportunity to enhance a patient's access to care. You are directed to develop a comprehensive plan to expand health professionals' scope of practice. This will include conducting a thorough legislative review to identify ways to allow health care professionals to work to their full scope of practice, and working with midwives and other health professionals to implement regulated midwifery.

### **Expand Seniors Care**

By 2025, one in four Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will be seniors. Working with your colleagues, I expect you to: provide in-home healthy living assessments for seniors aged 70 years and older at no cost to them; create a home support system that is flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of seniors; modernize the existing Medical Transportation Assistance Program; and, create a dementia management program to allow timely identification and assessment of individuals with dementia, and ensure that effective treatment and care plans are in place to support them and their caregivers.

### **Mental Health and Addictions Care**

One in five people in Newfoundland and Labrador experiences a mental health or addictions issue in a given year. This issue must be tackled openly and heads on. To enhance access to services, you will be responsible to work with your colleagues to implement a comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, which will include: continuing to support the work of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions; developing a more coordinated, integrated and responsive approach across departments and agencies when addressing mental health and addictions needs; reviewing mental health legislation to ensure the province is keeping pace with emerging best

practices; strengthening policies to demonstrate the importance placed on mental health within the healthcare system; establishing an adult inpatient unit for the treatment of eating disorders; working with community partners and schools to ensure coordinated and seamless approaches to mental health and addictions; developing a mental health and addictions course for the high school curriculum; and, encouraging and supporting employers to assist employees who are coping with mental health and addictions issues.

### **Health Infrastructure**

Improving healthcare infrastructure plays a key role in strengthening the efficient delivery of quality care within the healthcare system. The construction of a new mental health facility to replace the Waterford Hospital is a priority and will proceed without delay. In 2016, you must work with the Minister of Transportation and Works to plan and define the scope of work so that construction can begin in 2017, taking advantage of the available local skilled workforce that will be finishing work on other large projects at that time. The planning process will involve finding the right tool for the design, construction, financing and possible maintenance of the project, including traditional delivery and performance-based infrastructure. Further, you must immediately begin the process for replacement of the Western Memorial Regional Hospital with a new regional hospital.

### **Autism Services**

Autism-related services are presently delivered by many departments. You will lead the development of a provincial autism strategy in collaboration with your colleagues to address the lack of communication between government departments responsible for providing autism-related services. You must also eliminate use of IQ70 to determine service needs and provision of autism related services.

In fulfilling your responsibility as Minister you must ensure collaboration, in a positive and constructive manner, with your Cabinet colleagues. I take this opportunity to remind you that as you carry out your responsibilities, as a Member of the House of Assembly and Member of Cabinet, adhering to the Code of Conduct and the Conflict of Interest guidelines are mandatory, to ensure you discharge your duties with the highest ethical standards.

Deputy Ministers are your key source of support and will provide you with non-partisan advice in meeting your responsibilities. I expect you to develop a positive, respectful and trusting relationship with your Deputy Minister and the public service. I would also ask that you be mindful that Deputy Ministers, among their various responsibilities, are ultimately accountable to me, through the Clerk of the Executive Council.

Our government will report back to the public annually on the achievement of our commitments and make adjustments as required. As a Minister you are accountable for achieving these priorities and meeting other responsibilities within your Department.

Together, we will provide strong leadership to deliver the change we need to move beyond today's challenges and on to a stronger tomorrow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dwight Ball", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

**DWIGHT BALL**  
Premier