

December 14, 2015

Honourable Cathy Bennett
Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board,
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women,
Minister Responsible for the Human Resource Secretariat,
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission,
Minister Responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer,
and Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation

Dear Minister Bennett:

I am honoured to welcome you to your role as Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Minister Responsible for the Human Resource Secretariat, Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission, Minister Responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation. 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.

As Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, you have lead responsibility in ensuring management of the people's resources and revenue to ensure it provides the programs and services needed to support the residents and communities of the province. As Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, I expect you to oversee these aspects of our mandate, together with a number of specific items outlined below.

Financial Management and Planning

I expect you to establish a realistic process for annual budgeting that takes into consideration the volatility of commodity predictions currently used. In light of volatile commodity price forecasts, you will establish a risk-based approach to estimating resource-based revenues to minimize potential negative budget variances. In addition, to ensure our resources not only benefit the present generation, but future generations as well, when the financial situation improves you will establish a Legacy Fund. At that time, a proportion of total oil revenues will be invested in a diversified wealth fund with the goal of compounding our oil wealth for the future. The Legacy Fund will be bound by strict investment and operational rules, with a view to disciplined and prudent financial management for long-term stability.

Taxation

I expect you to complete a comprehensive independent review of the current tax system, including tax expenditures, to identify ways to simplify the system. As part of this review, you will work with your colleague in the Department of Natural Resources to review the current mining tax system to ensure it is competitive. You should also work with your colleagues to consult with industry to assess areas of demand and offer labour-based tax incentives for businesses in emerging industries and for employers in the skilled trades who increase the number of apprentices they employ.

Shared Priorities

Other priorities that will require you to collaborate with your colleagues include: ensuring financial systems and legislative frameworks can facilitate the development of multi-year funding arrangements for community organizations; and, working with departments to monitor and report on the status of implementation of Auditor General Recommendations.

As Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, you will lead our government's efforts to advance true social, legal, cultural and economic equality for all women and girls in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In this important role, I expect you to focus your attention and efforts on the critical goals of gender diversity in leadership and preventing violence against women, as outlined below.

Promote Gender Diversity in Leadership

Women remain underrepresented in leadership positions. Barriers to equal participation in leadership roles means Newfoundland and Labrador is losing out on valuable insights and expertise. To address this important issue, you will lead the development of a women's leadership strategy and work with women's organizations to address barriers to gender diversity in leadership. I also expect you to host a biennial conference on the status of women in NL to facilitate knowledge sharing and mentorship opportunities with leaders in the community, academia, business and politics. You will support your colleagues in the development of family-friendly policies to promote gender diversity in the labour force.

Violence Prevention

You must lead government's efforts to prevent violence against women and other at-risk populations. Working with your Cabinet colleagues, you will support the expansion of the Family Violence Intervention Court beyond St. John's and the establishment of regional adolescent health clinics. You will also lead our efforts to advance the status of Aboriginal women and girls in the province, and support this government's participation in the national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the implementation of recommendations.

The Human Resource Secretariat serves an essential function in the operation of the Provincial Government by leading the human resource needs of departments in support of quality service and program delivery and the provision of labour relations advice, including collective bargaining. In this role, I expect you to oversee this mandate and implement the matters outlined below.

Review Public Service Pension

I expect you to work with the Joint Trusteeship of the Public Service Sector Pension Plan to address any and all remaining issues with the plan.

Pensioners Overpayments

You are directed to reverse the request for pensioners to pay back overpayments they received due to administrative errors, and cease any and all ongoing collection efforts effective immediately.

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,



DWIGHT BALL
Premier