December 14, 2015

Honourable Christopher Mitchelmore
Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development,
Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency,
and Minister Responsible for the Research and Development Corporation

Dear Minister Mitchelmore:

I am honoured to welcome you to your role as Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency, and Minister Responsible for the Research and Development 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.

The Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development is responsible for programs and services in support of building a diverse and sustainable economy. The broad mandate of the department is to develop a vibrant, diverse and sustainable economy, with productive, prosperous and culturally-rich communities and regions, making Newfoundland and Labrador a business and tourism destination of choice. As Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, you lead key components of economic and rural sustainability and in the execution of your responsibilities, I expect you to focus particular attention on the initiatives outlined below.

**Tourism Potential**

Tourism is a vital component of the provincial economy that supports jobs and businesses, particularly in rural areas. Working with the tourism industry, I expect you to champion tourism growth in Newfoundland and Labrador. Growth will be achieved by working collaboratively with stakeholders and your colleagues on the following areas:

- Focusing tourism marketing on the province’s natural and cultural heritage;
- Strengthening connections between tourism and the outfitting, agricultural and fishing industries, including a review to reduce red tape barriers;
- Developing a highway signage solution that is consumer friendly;
- Conducting a new visitor exit survey on visitor perceptions and preferences;
- Studying the economic impact of recreation activities for tourism;
- Ensuring transportation infrastructure meets the needs of the tourism sector; and,
- Enhancing the availability of tourism attractions throughout the year, including winter and shoulder seasons.

**Arts and Culture**

Artists are essential to the preservation and progression of our cultural identity. I expect you to work with stakeholders to develop a Status of Artist Act. This work will include collaborating with the arts community to review funding mechanisms and identify innovative models to help improve the social and economic status of professional artists in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Manufacturing**

The manufacturing sector in Newfoundland and Labrador accounts for 30 per cent of our exports and employs 14,000 people. I am tasking you with assisting the manufacturing sector to grow its outputs and value-added exports. To do so, you will be expected to work with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters to revamp government support programs for the recruitment and retention of manufacturing employees and remove barriers to export markets.
Innovation

Growing a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation presents tremendous economic potential for our province. Working collaboratively with your colleagues, I expect you to encourage innovation and diversification. Your first task will be to develop a new provincial innovation strategy in collaboration with industry and innovation partners. This will include ensuring timely, effective and flexible government funding and support that is underpinned by transparency and accountability.

The province’s advanced education system will be a key partner in fostering innovation. I expect you to expand business incubation/acceleration programs in collaboration with Memorial University and other organizations to provide prospective entrepreneurs with increased access to investors, advisors, space and networking services, with the end goal of seeding new business. You must also work with your colleagues and post-secondary institutions to help develop a flexible intellectual property policy to foster interaction and innovation within the private sector.

We must also engage our young people in the benefits of entrepreneurship early. You must work with your colleagues to: establish a Young Entrepreneur Retention Program to encourage innovation and provide an incentive for youth to build businesses in our province; support young entrepreneurs through a mentorship program with industry leaders; increase options for co-operative education in our K-12 system; and, provide student scholarships at the grade school and post-secondary level.

Social enterprises combine business innovation with social, cultural and environmental outcomes. I expect you to consult with stakeholders in the not-for-profit sector to develop a social enterprise strategy with the aim of enhancing the benefits of the sector for the economy.

Communications

High-speed broadband internet is essential infrastructure. I expect you to work with the private sector and community-based organizations to expand broadband internet through the best and most appropriate technology available. Further, an effective and reliable communication network is critical to economic growth and public safety. I also expect you to work with the private sector and community-based organizations to provide expanded community-based infrastructure and improved wireless coverage.

International Trade

The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is the most ambitious trade agreement ever negotiated by Canada or the European Union. I expect you to lead work with your colleagues and the federal government to develop the final program details and to help implement the agreement on the CETA Fisheries Investment Fund.
As Minister Responsible for the Research and Development Corporation, you will oversee its mandate to strengthen the focus, quantity, quality, and relevance of research and development for the long-term economic benefit of Newfoundland and Labrador. Supporting highly-qualified people, world class infrastructure and cutting-edge research is key to innovation and opening up new areas of opportunity.

**Research Funding**

Memorial University, including Grenfell Campus and the Marine Institute, and the College of the North Atlantic are well known for being leaders in ocean technology, engineering, business and other industries specific to our region. You will work with your colleagues to support Newfoundland and Labrador’s public post-secondary institutions to expand research and educational programming in fields that foster economic growth for the province. The goal is to increase the province’s profile as a global leader in these industries and to facilitate the development of a skilled workforce to support them.

**Energy**

Newfoundland and Labrador’s unique location in the North Atlantic presents an opportunity for the local industry to develop techniques and technologies to become a global leader in deepwater exploration and development. In collaboration with your colleagues, you must work to position the province as a global Centre of Excellence for deepwater oil and gas development. This would include encouraging and funding research and design efforts in areas such as subsea resources extraction, ice management and operating in extreme weather, corrosion mitigation, enhanced oil recovery, logistics and maritime transportation and other fields that foster the innovation needed to overcome the challenges of oil and gas extraction in similar locations.

Newfoundland and Labrador’s forestry and agrifoods industries are important contributors to local communities and economies, particularly in rural areas of the province. You are responsible for supporting the development and sustainability of these sectors in addition to animal health and enforcement and compliance of the forestry service. In addition to your overall departmental responsibilities, I expect you to give priority to the following areas.

**Promote Economic Growth in the Agriculture Sector**

You are responsible for promoting economic growth in the agriculture sector. In consultation with your colleagues, you must conduct an updated economic analysis of the agriculture and agrifoods sectors to better understand the full economic potential of this industry. Working with local producers and processors and where possible, the new federal government, you will develop a new food security and agriculture growth strategy. You must work with farmers to make more Crown land available for agricultural use, including implementation of a land registry and a simplified application process. The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture is a key partner and provision of a funding coordinator position will assist them to maximize opportunities for development. You should also lead the exploration of new opportunities for partnerships with federal government to leverage funds for agriculture development.
Revitalize the Forestry Sector

You must focus on growing and modernizing the forestry industry. You will lead the implementation of the Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (2014-2024), with particular emphasis on environmental protection, wood fibre security and sustainability, and community involvement. Investments in research and development will enhance and sustain the current forest industry and support diversification and new investments in the areas of bioenergy, biorefining and engineered wood products. Researchers at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University, College of the North Atlantic and other research institutions are key partners to work with to explore innovation in areas such as fibre allocation and transportation, enhanced forest inventories and climate change.

Protect Animal Welfare

This government is committed to providing greater protection for animals in Newfoundland and Labrador. To achieve this, you will work with stakeholders to enhance the animal health and protection legislation which will include reviewing the current enforcement model and establishing an Animal Protection Account.

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