Tabled by the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi – with leave
K. Hawley George
November 3, 2026

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
Newfoundland and Labrador

James Dinn, M.H.A.
District of St. John's Centre

July 28, 2026

Dear Minister Tibbs (Chris),

Thank you for meeting with us on July 21 to discuss your government's climate change action plan. Please pass on our appreciation to Valerie Snow, Susan Squires, and David Thomlyn for their insights. Such meetings are welcome if we are to address climate change and its consequences for our province. Action 6.4 of the Health Accord Report recommends government "Take an aggressive and proactive approach to addressing the climate emergency through increased awareness, focused planning, aligned resources, and effective accountability mechanisms." We look forward to future discussions to learn more about your commitment to creating an action plan "with clear and achievable emission reduction targets and report on them regularly."

1. Would your department share with us where your department is in developing this action plan and what you propose as achievable emission reduction targets?

Adaptation Tool:
It was encouraging to learn that your department has launched an Adaptation Tool for towns and municipalities to assist them with cost-benefit analysis and assessment of new projects in light of climate change. Nevertheless, we are concerned, especially in light of provincial government changes to its multi-capital works program that this might not be as beneficial as it seems. What good is an adaptation tool if municipalities can't access funding to pursue projects? Furthermore, someone at the municipal level must be able to use the tool, and we know that many municipalities are small and already lack the human resources. Finally, the Adaptation Tool seems to place the onus of climate adaptation on municipalities.

We were hoping to hear more about the province's plans to mitigate the effects of climate change on existing municipal and provincial infrastructure. As we noted, rising sea levels represent a significant threat to coastal communities and roads. Areas of the Northern Peninsula (Route 430) are at sea level and particularly susceptible to damage from rising sea levels. A section of the highway was rerouted in 2009 at a cost of $15.4 million after the original section that ran along a cliff was destroyed as the result of a landslide. Then there was the disruption - and cost - to the town and to people who lost their homes or had to be relocated.

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We are concerned that climate change is having an increasingly devastating effects on northern communities and indigenous people who depend on ice and a cold environment. Sheila Watt-Cloutier's book, "The Right to Be Cold," makes the draws the connection between protecting the Arctic and the survival of Inuit culture. We know that Arctic temperatures are rising, Arctic ice is retreating, that sea ice has become unsafe to travel on. As we noted during our meeting, in 2023, Caine's Quest was stopped as a result of unseasonably high temperatures and deteriorating ice conditions. It is important for government, in partnership with indigenous groups, to assess and mitigate the effects of climate change, especially for those who call northern communities home.

2. Has government done a risk analysis of the potential damage and developed a costed plan to address these risks? If so, would you be willing to share that analysis and plan?

Regional Transit:
Creating or expanding regional transit will allow people to live affordably where they want, allow people who do not drive to access services, relieve housing pressure on large urban centres, and help achieve emission reduction targets (especially with an electrified fleet of vehicles). We provided several examples of how a public transit system would benefit the people of St. John's and surrounding municipalities. People, especially people who do not drive, would have the freedom to live outside of the city if they had reliable and affordable regional transportation.

We have often heard stated in the House of Assembly as a reason to keep gasoline prices low is the fact that people have no choice but to own a vehicle because there is no public transportation. That, however, is the result of a policy choice. Government has tended to focus on costly road construction to alleviate traffic congestion. Rather than reducing congestion and travel time it actually encourages more driving through a phenomenon of induced.

The Northeast Avalon is the most densely populated area of the province and would benefit from a publicly owned and operated regional transit system. It is also the most logical place to begin, even as a pilot project with federal and provincial funding. The existing Metrobus service could be expanded into a regional system that would connect communities on the Northeast Avalon (or Avalon Peninsula for that matter). This would remove the necessity for people to own a vehicle or to use their vehicles and could reduce traffic on highways and roads. We know in certain jurisdictions, there are dedicated lanes during high peak traffic times for buses or for people who carpool. In Ottawa, there are roads specially built for the bus system. These measures combined with the use of electric buses will have the effect of moving people efficiently, reducing vehicle traffic, and significantly reducing emissions, not to mention creating jobs.

If the pilot project is successful, government could expand the service and consider variants of the model for other parts of the province.

3. Will your department commit to working with the Federal government to establish a regional transportation pilot project for the Northeast Avalon to assess the feasibility of a regional transportation system?

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Electrification:
One clear way to reduce emissions and help transition people from oil to renewable energy is to incentivize electrification of the province. As a result of its drive towards electrification, China has been largely insulated from the war with Iran and resulting oil shocks that have rocked global economies and increased transportation costs for people. South Korea requires large parking lots to install solar panel canopies. Starting in 2027, the United Kingdom will require developers to install heat pumps and solar panels on new builds and is allowing homeowners to install plug in solar panels.

As we noted, a mutual friend of ours living in the centre of St. John's installed solar panels on their home (not an ideal location by their own admission) which has allowed them to charge their electric vehicle and sell power back into the grid during summer months. Not only would solar power help achieve emission reduction, the savings would help pay for the installation and subsidize electricity rates for homeowners.

If the province took a more aggressive approach to electrification, it could add capacity to the grid, expand charging stations, and make the use of EVs more attractive and feasible. For example, establishing solar panel canopies for parking lots or installing solar panels on public buildings and businesses. The City of St. John's is leading the way in electrification and transitioning from fossil fuels and would be a valuable resource to the province as it transitions to a renewable future.

The province needs to continue to fund programs to help not-for-profits and charitable organisations to avail of funding to convert from oil to electricity. We know of several organisations seeking to convert from oil to electricity but are prohibited from doing so by the cost.

4. Will your department commit to creating an energy plan that prioritizes hydro, solar, wind, and tidal power?
5. Will you commit to establishing programs to subsidize small businesses and not-for-profits transition from oil to electricity?

Just Transition:
A transition to renewable energy takes place, it must be done in the context of a larger plan that protects the environment, economy, communities, and workers. Above all, a transition plan must be transparent and with a Just Transition Secretariat answerable to the House of Assembly. We cannot wait until oil reserves are exhausted to develop a plan. That must be done now.

We know that failing to do so risks our province crashing out of the oil economy. We saw this happen with the collapse of the commercial cod fishery. Despite the warnings of fish harvesters and scientists, the moratorium came as a shock and resulted in the loss of over 30,000 jobs and one of the greatest out migrations in our province's history. The effect on rural communities and the economy was devastating.

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We also know what happens to mining communities when the resource runs out or becomes unprofitable to extract. Bay du Nord is set to come online in 2031 – at the time oil demand is set to reach its peak with declining demand after that. Bay du Nord is a marginal project based on the fact it is in international waters offshore and will be one of the deepest and possibly most expensive wells in the world. There are oil fields with cheaper and more abundant supplies. BP has already stepped back from the project leaving Equinor as the only proponent. The company I set to make its final investment decision next year. If it were a financially viable project, they would have already decided to proceed. At any point, Equinor could decide that it is in its best interest to abandon the project. In the end, the province will bear the brunt of the decision.

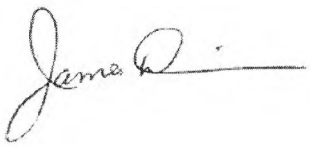
Our 2022 Private Member's Resolution on just transition legislation attempted propose a plan that would allow us to transition from fossil fuels to a renewable economy that would protect indigenous rights, workers, the environment, and communities. Unfortunately, it received the support of the NDP and the independent MHA for Lake Melville. It was a missed opportunity.

6. Will your government commit to introducing Just Transition Legislation in the fall sitting of the House of Assembly and work with Liberal, NDP, and the independent member to craft this legislation?
7. Will you commit to improving the energy efficiency of government owned buildings and installing solar panels on these buildings where feasible?

Conclusion:
Our province has incredible renewable resources and potential beyond oil which could provide sustainable innovation and a prosperous future for people. We have the opportunity to be leaders. I've attempted to encapsulate the key points of our discussion we had and look forward in the months ahead to having more discussions on your government's climate action plan and what a renewable and sustainable economy would look like. In the meantime, I look forward to response to the questions above.

Again, thank you for taking the time to meet with us.

Take care,



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Cc: Sheilagh O'Leary, MHA for St. John's East-Quidi Vidi

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