

Tuesday, March 15th, 2005

The House met at 10 o'clock in the morning pursuant to the adjournment motion adopted on December 16th, 2004.

The Sergeant-at-Arms announced the arrival of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Edward Roberts, Q.C.

The Speaker left the Chair.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor took the Chair.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was then pleased to make the following Speech:

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The First Session of the Forty-Fifth General Assembly of this Honourable House of Assembly is about to be prorogued, but before releasing you from your duties, I wish to thank you for the careful and sympathetic attention given to the important matters brought before you by my Ministers. Your commitment to your work and diligence deserve our appreciation and acknowledgment.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

Sixty-six pieces of legislation were enacted during this Session of the Honourable House of Assembly. In particular, legislative initiatives were taken in the areas of labour standards, justice, the fishing industry, financial affairs, municipal affairs, health, government services and Inuit land claims..

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

As noted in my Speech opening this Session, my Government introduced a Bill to amend the *House of Assembly Act* and the *Elections Act* to require that elections occur at fixed four year intervals and to impose a tighter timetable for by-elections when seats become vacant. Also as noted in my Speech opening this Session, my Government introduced legislation to regulate and increase transparency around the activity of lobbyists. During 2004, my Government proclaimed the new *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and also introduced during this Session a *Transparency and Accountability Act* which would require public institutions to operate in a more open manner and to report more regularly to the public on their performance. Moreover, my Government has made a commitment that it will regularly release information of its own accord in the interest of transparency and honesty.

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Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In order to recognize the importance of the fishing industry to this Province, my Government introduced and this Honourable House subsequently passed Bills affecting the fishery. The *Professional Fish Harvesters Act* was amended in order to more accurately reflect the different responsibilities of the professional fish harvesters certification board and the disciplinary board. As well, an amendment to the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act* was enacted to provide that the price for fish species may be set by auction. During the fall sitting of this House, an *Act to Establish the Fish Processing Licencing Board* was enacted and an *Act to Amend the Fish Inspection Act* was introduced to implement recommendations of the Fish Processing Policy Review Commission, the Dunne Report.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In the area of health, my Government introduced an Act to amend the *Pharmaceutical Association Act* to effect changes recommended in Government's White Paper on the regulation of professional organizations. As well, a new *Act to Revise the Law of the Practice of Optometry* was also introduced during this Session. Ever mindful of the importance of health information in today's society, my Government introduced an *Act to Incorporate the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information* during this Session.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

After many years of negotiation it was with pleasure that this Honourable House ratified and gave the force of law to the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement during the fall sitting of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

During this Session, the *Labour Standards Act* was amended to incorporate a system of compassionate care leave for employees to provide care and support for family members who have a serious medical condition with significant risk of death. The *Workplace, Health, Safety and Compensation Act* was amended to establish a program that considers the cost experience of employers and compliance with the Act, regulations and Commission policies in certain occupational, health and safety requirements in determining the amount of employers' assessment under the Act. A number of municipal affairs-related statutes including the *Fire Prevention Act*, the *Municipal Affairs Act*, the *Emergency Measures Act* and the *Municipalities Act* were amended during this Session of the House. The penalties for offences under the *Highway Traffic Act* were increased to provide more deterrence, as well as the *Provincial Offences Act* was amended.

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Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In keeping with my Government's commitment to the people of this Province during the General Election of 2003, this Honourable House passed *An Act To Amend The Automobile Insurance Act*, the *Insurance Companies Act* and the *Highway Traffic Act* to effect certain reforms respecting automobile insurance. As noted in my Speech opening this Session, a new Act respecting the Government Purchasing Agency which also amends the *Public Tender Act* was introduced to provide that public purchasing decisions are administered in a way that would derive maximum benefit from taxpayers' dollars while promoting business opportunities for companies in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Agency will be given greater autonomy to assess bids and recommend purchases in accordance with fair and objective criteria.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

An Act Respecting Labour Sponsored Venture Capital Credits was introduced and passed during the Session to provide that eligible investors and corporations that qualify may apply for designation as labour sponsored capital venture corporations. Among the other legislative measures enacted during this session were *An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act*, *An Act to Amend the Corporations Act*, *An Act to Amend the Survival of Actions Act*, *An Act to Amend the Mineral Act*, *An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products Act*, *An Act to Amend the Motorized Snow Vehicles and All Terrain Vehicles Act*, *An Act to Provide for Court Security*, *An Act to Amend the Jury Act*, *An Act Respecting Provincial Court Judges Pensions*, *An Act to Amend the Law Society Act*, *An Act to Amend the Pensions Funding Act*, two Acts to amend the *Financial Administration Act*, *An Act to Amend the Schools Act* and the *Colleges Act* and *An Act to Amend the Occupational, Health and Safety Act*.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

I thank you for the large measure of Supply you have granted. I assure you that the appropriations that you have granted have been and will be expended by my Ministers with care and efficiency.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

It is my pleasure that the First Session of the Forty-Fifth General Assembly now be prorogued and it is prorogued accordingly.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber.

The Speaker resumed the Chair.

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The Speaker then said, "It is the wish and pleasure of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that this General Assembly be prorogued, and it is prorogued accordingly".

A. John Noel, Q.C.,
Clerk of the House of Assembly