

Monday, March 27th, 2017

The House met at 1:30 'clock in the afternoon pursuant to adjournment.

The Sergeant-at-Arms announced the arrival of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Frank F. Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA.

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-Eighth General Assembly of the Honourable House of Assembly is about to be prorogued, but before releasing you from your duties, I wish to express gratitude for the careful and sympathetic attention that you have given to important matters brought to you by our ministers.

During this first session, 71 pieces of legislation were debated and passed in this Honourable House. In our government's inaugural session, our legislation was guided by the principles of supporting residents and communities, greater fiscal responsibility, as well as openness, transparency, and accountability.

Fiscal Responsibility, Openness, Transparency and Accountability

The first Bill our Government introduced was Bill 1, the *Independent Appointments Commission Act*, creating Newfoundland and Labrador's first merit-based appointment process for agencies, boards and commissions and an Independent Appointments Commission. The IAC is the only one of its kind in Canada.

For years, Newfoundland and Labrador was the only province in Atlantic Canada to pay an additional salary to Members of the House of Assembly serving as Parliamentary Secretaries and Parliamentary Assistants. In keeping with government's commitment to fiscal responsibility and transparency, Bill 3 amended the *Parliamentary Assistant Act and Parliamentary Secretaries Act*, eliminating compensation for parliamentary secretaries and the parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

Our Government is modernizing how public bodies purchase goods and services by replacing the decades old *Public Tender Act*. Bill 46 introduced the *Public Procurement Act*, a piece of legislation that brings greater transparency to the procurement process and shifts from just getting the best price to getting the best value.

Bill 61 introduced the *Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act*, bringing openness and transparency to government expenditures through an annual listing of all employees in departments and a number of agencies, boards, commissions, health

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care bodies, educational bodies and Crown corporations who receive total compensation of more than \$100,000 a year.

The Lands Act was amended in Bill 63. Our Government is improving access to Crown lands to residents and businesses so that the true value of these assets can be realized in communities throughout the province. Government is increasing accessibility and enforcement related to crown lands by making much needed improvements to its processes and practices.

To enhance the accountability of the Provincial Government on the management of fiscal resources, Bill 65 amended the *Financial Administration Act*, which requires tabling of public accounts on or before October 31 of the following fiscal year.

Supporting People and Communities

Our government has advanced important legislation to support residents and communities.

Bill 7 amended the *Vital Statistics Act, 2009*, ensuring the rights of transgendered individuals by removing the requirement for a person to undergo sex reassignment surgery prior to changing the gender marker on the person's birth or marriage registration. Bill 8 amended the *Change of Name Act, 2009*, changing the definition of child to a person under the age of 16 years, and lowering the age requirement for applying for a change of name from the age of majority to 16 years of age.

Bill 33 amended the *Highway Traffic Act*, increasing the fines for using a hand-held cellular phone while driving a motor vehicle.

Our Government introduced Bill 34, the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act*, protecting the environment through regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from large industrial facilities.

Amendments introduced in Bill 35 change the *Smoke-Free Environment Act, 2005* and the *Tobacco Control Act*, in order to further protect the public, in particular children and youth, from the harms of tobacco products. These amendments will cover the sale, use and promotion of flavoured tobacco, e-cigarette, and hookah products throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our Government introduced Bill 43, the *Access to Abortion Services Act*, allowing for the creation of safe access zones around health care facilities and the homes of health professionals and clinic owners providing abortion services in the province. This Bill

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balances the rights of individuals to secure, respectful and private access to legal medical services, with the rights of others to protest or express dissent.

Bill 52 amended the *Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act*, strengthening the protection of individuals who have difficulty accessing credit through traditional lending institutions by requiring payday lenders to be licensed, and imposing restrictions and obligations that protect consumers.

Compassionate Compare Leave provisions were increased from 8 to 28 weeks, through amendments in Bill 53, relating to the *Labour Standards Act*. This allows family members to care for a gravely ill family member and not have to worry about job security during this very difficult time in their lives.

Bill 55 introduced the *Secure Withdrawal Management Act*, providing parents of children with drug addiction an avenue to ensure their child receives care. The goal of the legislation is to ensure those young people who are most at-risk of harming themselves or others, can go through withdrawal in a secure facility. Once withdrawal has occurred, they will be in a better place to discuss their treatment options.

Our government amended the *Workplace Health, Safety, and Compensation Act* with Bill 59, providing presumptive cancer coverage to the career and volunteer firefighters that help protect the province's families and communities. Adding a presumptive clause to the legislation means a firefighter who serves for a specific period of time and develops a specific form of cancer will be presumed to have developed that cancer as a result of their work, and can avail of worker's compensation benefits.

Ensuring that government policies, programs, and services meet the needs of seniors, Bill 64 introduced the *Seniors' Advocate Act*. The Office of the Seniors' Advocate will work collaboratively with seniors, their families, caregivers, policy makers and frontline service providers to identify and address systemic issues facing seniors in our province.

Bill 68 amended the *Highway Traffic Act*, making it mandatory for a police officer to order the vehicle of an impaired driver to be impounded. This amendment will reduce the ability of impaired drivers to commit repeat impaired driving offences. The amendments also include the introduction of a mandatory ignition interlock program as a condition for driver's license reinstatement following a conviction for impaired driving under the Criminal Code. Additionally, drivers less than 22 years of age will be required to maintain a blood alcohol content of zero per cent. The intent of this amendment is to give young drivers the opportunity to form good driving habits that separate alcohol consumption from driving.

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Reducing and mitigating preventable harm within the health care system, Bill 71 introduced the *Patient Safety Act*. This Bill ensures patients and families have access to information about their care, ensures regional health authorities consistently report to the Minister of Health and Community Services on indicators such as hand washing, and establishing regional and provincial structures to oversee quality assurance activities. The legislation will mark the first time that Newfoundland and Labrador patients and their families will have the statutory right to recommendations that are the result of a quality assurance activity related to an adverse health event.

Summary

In summary, our legislative initiatives enhanced fiscal responsibility, increased the level of openness, transparency, and accountability, and supported residents and communities.

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

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

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber.

The Speaker resumed the Chair.

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".

Sandra Barnes,
Clerk of the House of Assembly.