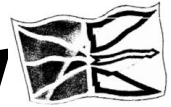


JULY 27, 2001

Noteworthy



FOI Act report released

Premier Roger Grimes and Justice Minister Kelvin Parsons released the report of the committee formed to review and make recommendations on all aspects of the Freedom of Information Act.

"I want to congratulate the committee for undertaking this comprehensive review," said Premier Grimes. "The review included a public consultation process and this report reflects the outcome of that consultation. The Freedom of Information Act review is part of our commitment to ensure a greater level of openness and accountability and is another means by which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can hold government accountable."

"Government will now consider the report, which includes an extensive examination of the act and regulations, and makes recommendations on its structure, mandate and time frames," said Minister Parsons. "We will review these recommendations and move forward with the legislation in the fall session of the House of Assembly."

The Freedom of Information Act was enacted in 1981, with no major changes to the legislation since then. "While the act was considered a pioneering piece of legislation at the time, in the past 20 years there have been major changes in how we manage information, and new technology has changed how we communicate," said the minister. "We want to ensure that our legislation remains clear and relevant in this new age of information."

"Striking the Balance - Report of the Freedom of Information Review Committee - Volume 1" is available on government's Web site at www.gov.nf.ca/publicat/ or by contacting the Queen's Printer at (709) 729-3649. Volume 2, highlights of submissions and comments to the committee, is available through the Queen's Printer. ☞

Controlling insurance costs a priority

Walter Noel, Minister of Government Services and Lands, recently stated his concerns about forecasts of significantly higher insurance rates made by the Insurance Brokers Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Insurance Bureau of Canada. The minister also invited consumer comments on the matter.

"Automobile insurance rates in this province are already quite high," said Minister Noel. "Government will do everything reasonable to ensure they rise no more than necessary. Industry must do likewise. Our officials are monitoring developments to ensure that any rate increases are justifiable."

Insurance rates must be approved by the Public Utilities Board, and are based on the cost of accidents and other expenses of insurance companies. Government is reviewing industry claims that increased costs for minor soft tissue injuries are a major cause of the need for rate increases, and considering options to reduce the cost of such claims. Individuals can contact the Insurance and Pensions Division at (709) 729-2593 or e-mail to make their views known, insurancerates@gov.nf.ca. ☞

Waste management report released

Municipal and Provincial Affairs Minister Oliver Langdon and Environment Minister Ralph Wiseman recently released a report on solid waste management on the Avalon peninsula. The report, a synopsis of previous reports, is for discussion related to waste disposal issues.

"We have to deal with the Harbour Grace issue as quickly as we can," said Minister Langdon. "However, as we evaluated options for Harbour Grace, we felt it would be necessary to broaden our study and carry out comprehensive planning for the entire Avalon Peninsula."

A committee will be established to identify options for waste management, and will be asked to consider a regional approach for the Avalon. Individuals interested in being on the committee can contact the minister by August 10.

"Consultations on a provincial waste management strategy have concluded," said Minister Wiseman. "It is important for the Avalon region to begin examining its options now so that a regional approach and affordable solutions can be implemented." ☞

