

Opposition eager to see what's in throne speech, budget

By DAVE BARTLETT
 A TELEGRAM INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER
 THE TELEGRAM

Lt.-Gov. John Crosbie will read the province's speech from the throne this afternoon.

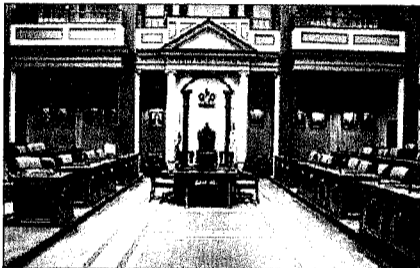
And the province will release its budget for the coming year Thursday.

After question period at the House of Assembly Tuesday, reporters were told Premier Danny Williams would not comment on the contents of either.

But the leaders of the opposition parties took questions.

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones says she hopes the government will address a number of issues, including the recommendations in the Cameron report, credit for fishing operations, a plan for rebuilding the economy — particularly the resources sector — and a better medical transportation program.

"More and more people are being referred to St. John's or referred outside of the province (for medical



The House of Assembly is shown in a file photo. Today, Lt.-Gov. John Crosbie will read the throne speech to MHAs anxiously waiting to hear budget details. — Telegram file photo

treatment) and they are practically bankrupting their families to be able to afford the treatments they require," she said.

Jones also said she's waiting to see

how the government will handle its first projected deficit in five years.

"I think the real test for this government is going to come when we start seeing deficits ... and how they're

able to manage those programs, those services, the infrastructure needs of the province and be able to carry forward with business," she said.

"It's easy to govern in times of cash, when you have lots of money and you can throw a cheque at every problem," continued Jones.

NDP Leader Lorraine Michael said she hopes the estimated \$1.27-billion surplus for the current year won't all go to paying down the province's debt.

"One of the things that I'm going to be looking for is what the government is going to do with the surplus that we are going into this budget with," she said.

Michael said while paying down the debt is important, the province still needs financial support for a number of programs, including home care, poverty reduction and seniors' and pensioners' issues.