

Regional/provincial

Parsons wants to regulate HOA sittings

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TC MEDIA

repeatedly assailed the government's decision.

"It's an embarrassment that Ms. Dunderdale decided to keep the people's representatives out of the House," said Parsons. "My hope is that this Bill will prevent prolonged closures of the House from ever happening again."

The House of Assembly is currently scheduled to re-open on March 5.

The Telegram

ST. JOHN'S — Opposition MHA Andrew Parsons is calling for predictability when it comes to the House of Assembly.

In a news release, Parsons, the MHA for Burgeo-lapointe, said he plans on introducing a private member's motion to regulate the opening of the House.

"The decision to open the House is too important to leave to the whim of the premier. There should be a regular and predictable schedule removing the discretion of government to close or cancel the House when it becomes inconvenient for them," Parsons said. "The people of the province deserve to have the House open so their representatives can discuss and debate issues important to them." The House of Assembly standing orders outline a framework for when the House should sit. However, that framework is only a guideline. The actual decision on when to have the House open is left to the government of the day.

Parsons said his bill will simply enshrine the relevant standing orders in legislation, which would compel the government to open the House.

Governments would still have some wiggle room, based on special circumstances, but they would be required to make their case in the House, and have it debated before making any changes.

Premier Kathy Dunderdale decided not to open the House of Assembly following the Oct. 11 provincial election. Of the five provinces to have general elections this fall, Newfoundland and Labrador was the only one not to have a legislative sitting.

Dunderdale has justified the decision by saying that the government has no legislation to pass; she has also called the dynamic in the House dysfunctional.

Both the Liberals and the NDP have