

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



June 7, 2024

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, New Brunswickers are trying to understand what happened with these travel nurse contracts, and, after this week of questioning, we still don't have clarity from the government. The Premier has said that he takes responsibility, but he then passes that off to the health authorities. I think New Brunswickers want to hear more. They want clarity and commitment from the Premier.

As I see it, in February, we had the Department of Social Development rush to sign this bad contract that put the government at risk and New Brunswickers at risk, but then the department got out of it within four months. It seems that the department didn't share that information, because the Department of Health, Horizon, and Vitalité signed similarly bad contracts with the same organization.

The Premier says that he's responsible for this fiasco. He talks about collaboration within government. How come the learnings didn't flow from Social Development to the Department of Health and the health networks, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we commissioned the Auditor General's review in order to understand more deeply what actually happened, what took place, and the details around it. As we know, there's still some outstanding information that I hope we can get to the bottom of. The purpose of doing this was to put all the cards on the table and ask: Okay, where are the gaps? What were the reasons? How do we do better? The purpose is always to do better in everything we do.

Now, during the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, there were decisions that were made quickly, and we saw that in the report. There were discussions about health care and nursing homes and putting people in them first. We had an outbreak of over 400 cases. We were in the middle of a pandemic, as some may remember. Some may have forgotten. I certainly will never forget it.

Mr. Speaker, I think we've learned a lot. We've also learned where responsibility needs to be taken in order to get better—better contracts, better negotiations. It's really about negotiating deals in any aspect, not only in the nursing contracts but also in anything we do. We can't just say: Oh, well, that can—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, we'd love for the Premier to put the cards on the table. We signed a bad contract, February to March. Then we signed more bad contracts at the very time when he

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fired the health care boards and fired the CEO. Imagine the pressure that those at Vitalité were under to deliver whatever the Premier wanted to save their jobs.

This is somebody who... Let me quote from one of the Premier's colleagues, the former Minister of Social Development, who said: "You avoid and circumvent process because you think it is a waste of time". The Premier has created a culture of circumventing process—of circumventing the oversight that the Auditor General was looking for and the controls that the Auditor General was looking for.

These contracts were signed in 2022. It took two years and the Auditor General offering to do an audit before the Premier would dig into this. Why didn't the Premier act sooner when we knew that bad contracts were being signed in July 2022?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, I don't think that it was a case of the Auditor General offering to do a review. I think that we requested the review. I think that's the order in which it went.

In relation to holding people accountable for signing bad contracts, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to do just that, because we all have to be accountable. I take responsibility. As Premier, I accept the challenge and the responsibility of this and the importance of this job, but, in doing that, I have to be in a position to hold other people accountable as well because we all have a role to play.

So, when we talk about whether we can get better at things, Mr. Speaker, we absolutely can, and that's why we have a report to work with. Am I encouraged by the boards themselves looking at better operations and at how we manage health care in the province?

We never tried to do that before—manage health care. For the suggestion about process, there is a time when you act. There is a time when you go through all the details and understand all the facts. No, you may not get everyone to agree, but at some point, you get on with it, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Green Party said earlier.

[Translation]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Premier. It is clear that this government cannot learn.

[Original]

We have a Premier who makes reckless and arbitrary decisions. He wants to move so fast that he is willing to sign bad contract after bad contract, to pay expenses without receipts, and to leave the health system with no oversight so that \$173 million of taxpayer money has created no value for the people of New Brunswick. It has had no oversight whatsoever,



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all on this Premier's watch. He talks about taking responsibility, and then he talks about whom he's going to hold accountable. We're looking to see whose head is going to roll when the Premier himself said that he would take responsibility for this. Will he acknowledge that he created a culture of doing what he said and not the proper due diligence to make sure that taxpayer dollars are being respected? This is a culture that he himself has created, as stated by members of his team. Will he take responsibility for that culture?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the Leader of the Opposition has no idea how the previous boards used to work. There was no oversight. There was no direct relationship to how the health authorities worked, how they were managed, and how they understood what was going on, on any day. There was no modelling of the service levels or looking at whether we could get better in other areas. When you look at many of the changes in health care and the improvements that have been made in spite of having 80 000 more people in the province, the oversight is growing every day, Mr. Speaker. The boards are taking on more evaluations of what goes on. This will be a lesson learned right here, and there will be lots of discussion that I will never know about as the boards take responsibility for the results in our entire health care system. That's what it's all about.

It's easy for the Leader of the Opposition to talk and pick out issues. But do you know what she can pick out and that she doesn't talk about? That is the tremendous success in this province and what we're doing now that's never been done before. We can talk about decisions made, changes, and all of that, but, Mr. Speaker, our province is stronger and better than it has ever been.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, what this province has never seen before is a waiting list for primary care of over 100 000 people. It's an Auditor General's report like this one that calls out \$173 million of taxpayer money gone, irresponsibly managed. If those are the kinds of things that we want to see like never before in this province, I think that the New Brunswick taxpayers will say this: No thank you.

In this case, there was no oversight. The Premier talks about the boards, the boards that weren't working. So, guess what? He got rid of them. He put himself in the position of being responsible for the oversight of the health care system. On his watch, money went out the door, with no receipts, no contracts signed, and to a private company because we know that's the Premier's favourite way of operating. Let's not do this through the civil service. Let's not do proper bureaucracy or governance. Let's get a private company to deliver these services. There were no language requirements up in Bathurst and Campbellton. It was a total mess, and this Premier refuses to take responsibility and acknowledge that this was a culture that he created as the person governing the health system when this money went out the door.

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Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess that's what happens when you lose six points in the polls. I guess that the mode of attack that we're seeing here from the Liberal opposition is a desperate, desperate way to attack the future member who is sitting in the gallery who is going to take her down in the next election. The reason that is going to happen, Mr. Speaker, is that the opposition is not telling all the facts. I have the facts. I have the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Some 58 000 people have access to primary care through NB Health Link. There are another 30 000 who are registered. Those are the facts. There are another 7 200 patients who have permanent—permanent—primary care through a doctor, physician, or nurse practitioner. That is contrary to what has been said time and time again—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to not telling the facts about everything, I think that lies squarely on the Premier's shoulders. We had contracts signed in July that became very expensive very fast. Monthly reports were going to the trustee, the Deputy Minister of Health, and the Premier's Office that stated that the contracts were getting out of hand. In 2023, we knew that we were well overspent on travel nurses. Staff in Vitalité knew it.

Staff at the Moncton Hospital who were casual were being replaced by travel nurses because they had to get deployed somewhere. New Brunswickers were left at home not working while travel nurses that we had committed to irresponsibly were trying to find places to go. This Premier knew we were overspending and did nothing about it for over a year. How does he answer that?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the other day, I told the Leader of the Opposition to pick a lane—pick a lane. It wasn't pick Elaine, which would be a *Seinfeld* episode. But it does remind me of a *Seinfeld* episode. George Costanza's most famous line was this: Just remember, if you believe it, it's not a lie. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe what the member of the opposition is saying, and I don't believe that they believe what they are saying. From a standpoint of what is happening, they have made allegations here on the floor of the Legislature. We are the ones who asked the AG to go in and look at this situation.

The member for Victoria-La-Vallée went through a litany of things that were contrary to what was intended. The one that we mentioned the other day, Atcon, was for Liberal friends—Liberal friends. All the other ones were the people of the province—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you. Thank you, minister.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the first contracts were signed in February 2022. The people in that

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department realized that the contracts were bad, and they got out of them in four months. Then their colleagues in other departments signed similarly bad contracts with the same company in July 2022, with cost overruns going into 2023.

More than a year later, in 2024, the government realized what was going on, supposedly, and asked the Auditor General to look into it. That is a year of spending extra money—a year of New Brunswick nurses sitting at home while travel nurses were being paid exorbitant amounts and a private company in Ontario was receiving taxpayer dollars. How does the Premier answer for the fact that New Brunswickers were bumped out of work to fund private contracts for the health system that were signed under his authority?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Where are the 70 000 people that the members across the way allege don't have a family doctor? Why haven't they signed up on NB Health Link? The orphan patient list has been exhausted. Everyone has been transferred to Health Link. If they haven't been, the members opposite need to tell us where those people are. This is much like the Minister of Education looking for those two schools. It is much like still asking for the name of that doctor who wants to work part-time and could work for Health Link or in one of the facilities where that type of arrangement is available.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Order.

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): When I look at the 600 days of disappointment list that I released when I was Leader of the Opposition and the member opposite was advising Brian Gallant, this is what I see: banned shale gas, raised business taxes, increased payroll taxes, abandoned seniors by cancelling Home First, started the seniors' asset grab... Well, that might have been the other time.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, minister.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, this Premier says that he'll take responsibility, but then, after just a few questions from me, he ducks his head and deflects to the Minister of Health because he doesn't want to answer these questions anymore. And the Minister of Health doesn't want to answer the questions either, so he turns to his terrible record with Health Link. He is not even in touch with his own Health Council that has provided the forecasts of people who are going without primary care, and he tries to deflect that responsibility onto the Office of the Official Opposition. Well, we'll take that responsibility come October of this year and make sure that New Brunswickers...

New Brunswickers deserve clear answers from their Premier, who took personal responsibility for the health care system in July 2022. Under his watch, \$173 million of

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taxpayer money did not go to the benefit of the patients in New Brunswick. What does he have to say to the nurses at the Moncton Hospital who lost their casual opportunities because we had already spent the money and we had to put travel nurses somewhere? What do you say to those people who lost income because of your decision?

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, to understand the full extent of the contracts, they weren't all take-or-pay contracts. Unfortunately, Vitalité's contract is, but that's not the best scenario. We know that Horizon is going to be out of using travel nurses in the next few weeks, and it is supplemental work for these folks who are coming in on the Vitalité contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the point that the Leader of the Opposition continues to miss is the big picture.

These are bad contracts, and I will make no excuse for them. They were done at a time of extreme health concern, at a time of extreme shortage of labour, and during a pandemic. We commissioned the AG's report last fall. It wasn't this year. It was last year—last fall. The point is, Mr. Speaker, that we're willing to look at these issues. How do we get better at making better contracts and getting better results?

I think the point that continues to be missed are the decisions made by this government to put New Brunswick on the map, to have people come here like never before, to have a balanced budget for six years in a row, to be the top-rated province in the country, after British Columbia—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Premier to check his memory because I believe it's failing him. The government didn't request the involvement of the Auditor General until after the *Globe and Mail* published a story unveiling the travel nurse scandal here in New Brunswick. That was just in February of this year. I think the Premier might be muddled on that, and, even so, didn't cooperate with the Auditor General. We have no information about the Premier's Office and its involvement, even when the deputy minister, the CEO of the health authority, and the trustee knew there was an overspend happening in early 2023. Can the Premier speak to when he was informed by his Deputy Minister of Health of the overspend that was accumulating on the travel nurse contracts?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, what we are witnessing here is a Leader of the Opposition in distress. I mean, the minister was very correct in what he said. There is obviously a distressed tone here. Maybe she is distressed not only by what she has recently read in the paper, but also

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by what happened last night. We're seeing acts of desperation. We're seeing personal attacks on me on what I can remember or what I can't remember.

Well, what I can remember, Mr. Speaker, is how bad Liberal governments have been for this province going back for generations. I can remember the state that our province was in back when we started. There was a huge deficit. I can remember all the taxes that were raised during the government that this member was a part of. There were tax increases in every sector, Mr. Speaker. We haven't done that anywhere. I can remember what's going on federally, with \$790 billion in new debt on our country. That's what's going to happen here in this province if it goes back to the red, Mr. Speaker.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Order.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, here we have the Premier talking about personal attacks, which is rich. Here we have the Premier playing the victim again.

I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. I am in distress. I share the distress of the people of New Brunswick who are so frustrated with their lack of access to health care, who are so frustrated with the lack of respect that this government has shown to nurses, nurse practitioners, family doctors, and people in the health care system. This government has shown a lack of respect to the unions that represent the people who work across the health care system in critical roles, such as environmental services.

People in New Brunswick are stressed out. I feel their pain and frustration at the fact that this government wants to talk about being stronger than ever when people are sicker than ever and waiting longer than ever. This government refuses to take real responsibility or take meaningful action to address the problems that New Brunswickers are facing. That gives me distress. It keeps me up at night, thinking about that nurse in Moncton—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Time, member.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, members.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what we're witnessing here is a leader who can't handle the stress—can't handle the stress. She will find it very difficult should she ever get the opportunity to deal with the real issues in the province. That's going to mean just saying okay to everything. We'll go back to the same situation with the huge debt and deficits that

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we've always witnessed from Liberal governments. We know what's coming. We know what to expect.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving in a very positive direction for the province. We are growing in every sector. Yes, the population has given us additional challenges within many sectors, such as the housing sector and the health sector. But, Mr. Speaker, if you look at what's happening in health... When the minister talks about MyHealthNB and the people registered in the program, they now have access to blood tests, X-rays, and MRIs. We are going to get better results with a patient-first strategy that uses our entire network because we're going to give people options. It's citizens first, patients first, and for the future.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, let's talk about handling stress. Let's talk about seeing a screenshot and tweeting out a knee-jerk reaction without looking into anything.

Let's talk about getting pushed into a corner, firing a CEO, firing the health boards, and then finding himself responsible for \$173-million worth of wasted taxpayer money. Let's talk about an all-time low level of satisfaction with this government from New Brunswickers across this province.

Their level of dissatisfaction is at higher levels than we've ever seen because they have a government that is not making responsible decisions as a team. They have one person who says it's his way or the highway, ignores the advice of his ministers, his deputy ministers, and his civil servants, and just follows the little voice in his head. When is the Premier going to hear the voices of the people of New Brunswick and actually act on health?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I'm actually surprised the Leader of the Opposition would quote the numbers she has recently read in polls. I mean, the minister commented on where that has gone for her. I'm surprised she's bringing that up. If she wants to bring that up and operate on polls, then so be it.

We'll operate on the facts that actually exist in terms of our province and what it's doing, whether it be in tourism, the health sector, or the work that is going on in education. And, yes, are we proud to represent parents and have parents know what's going on in schools? We are absolutely proud of that, and we will continue to support parents.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Order.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I'm very surprised that, as a parent, the Leader of the Opposition doesn't find that necessary, that the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to say: Oh, everything's fine.



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Mr. Speaker, everything is not fine within our school system. Teachers will tell you that. People working in the system will tell you that. Parents now know that. Will we continue to advocate for parents? Absolutely.

EDUCATION

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Well, it's interesting that the Premier should bring up parental rights. Surprise, surprise. I'd be interested in hearing what the often-referenced person in the gallery wants to say about parental rights in relation to her own views and situation.

But I appreciate that the Premier brought up parents because when I talk to parents from all across the province, I hear them say they want to focus on literacy rates. They want clean air in schools. They want their children to have access to a family doctor, and this government is doing nothing about that. They want their kids to have teachers in classrooms and not be crammed into a cafeteria with 70 other kids waiting for somebody qualified to teach them. They want a school bus to show up at their door every day. Parents can't get that now. They want a reliable school food program, which this government promises but can't deliver. If it were really listening to parents, then it would be making major investments in the education system and be focused on providing primary care to every family in this province when we have 160 000 people, more than ever, waiting.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, members.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think we've finally found a point we agree on. We have—how many?—8 000 new kids or something like that. We haven't had that for a long time, either. We've gone from the point of closing schools to now building 6 or 8 schools.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Order.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, they never saw that before, in their time. So this is a new phenomenon. But the thing we agree on is focusing on curriculum in schools. Let's get off the issues that are not things to be taught to kids directly. Let's decide what the curriculum is. Let's have a standard across the province and let that be taught so that we do focus on literacy, on math, and on the things that are going to make our kids productive and able to meet the challenges in the future. Let's not get sidetracked with so many issues that parents end up saying: Wow. Why are we doing this?



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(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Order.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): She wants to think about parents. About 70% or 80% of parents want to know—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

GOVERNMENT

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you asked New Brunswickers whether they're better off than they were four years ago, there would be a resounding no. Tenants live in fear that their next rent increase will be the one they can't afford. Others have already been forced out on the street. The number of people without a doctor or nurse practitioner continues to grow at an incredible rate. People are now choosing not to seek medical care because of excruciatingly long wait times in the ER.

Those who form government are supposed to govern, but that's impossible when the Premier makes unilateral decisions without consulting his Cabinet. This undermines the principles of democratic governance.

My question is this: When did the Premier decide he could govern alone based on his personal notions and particular biases?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): You know, Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the rhetoric in relation to how we're governing, what my characteristics are, and all those sorts of things. I appreciate that I am the target for all this. Mr. Speaker, I go back to the whole concept—

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Order

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I go back to the whole concept of what we're seeing in our province and how we work together to make decisions that actually send the province in a direction that has us progressing. We've seen that everywhere.

I guess the point that I would raise is that there comes a time, after you discuss, you go through things, you understand the facts, you make decisions, and you move on. We haven't been afraid to do that, and our province has benefitted from it. It's pretty clear in any sector. There are still issues and will always be issues.



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When you talk about affordability, as the Leader of the Green Party did, and some of the challenges, yeah, these are issues. That carbon tax is an issue. Mr. Speaker, 20¢ per litre is an issue, and everyone's feeling it, whether it's in groceries or in fuel. The Leader of the Green Party is very focused on and keeps raising the affordability issues to our citizens.

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, there's no working together on that side of the House. I can't imagine why the Premier said that. Over the course of his tenure, eight of his Cabinet ministers have lost confidence in him. That is eight parliamentarians who are dedicated to serving the people of New Brunswick, eight decent people who are intelligent, hard workers and are committed to working collaboratively in Cabinet, as shown by their part in guiding the ship of state to serve the public interest.

This Premier prevented them from doing their jobs as members of Cabinet. So, they either tendered their resignations or were turfed. How does he work now? He has his campaign manager in his office reviewing sex education programming. That's who he's working with. As my mother would say, the Premier needs to give his head a shake. She said it, in fact.

He's supposed to be the first among equals in Cabinet. How does the Premier explain that so many good, hardworking Cabinet ministers have been marginalized by him, relocated to the back benches, and left—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, member.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, to say this has been an easy year would be a bit of an understatement. There's no question about that. You know, in terms of what we agreed to in this government and the decisions made on dealing with issues, we had 80% to 85% support within our caucus at the time. You move on. You don't always get a consensus, and we didn't. It was obvious that we didn't.

It's unfortunate, and I feel bad that some of my colleagues retired or left because of that particular issue back in June of last year. Others were on the path to retirement in any case. You know who they are. Mr. Speaker, there comes a point—

(Interjections.)

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, they were on the path to retirement, and they decided. You know, the Minister of Health and the Minister of NRED. You know the folks who said: Well, look, we're not going to be re-offering. It's the same with the previous Minister of Environment. That's fair. I mean, if you have someone leave the caucus after a year or so, maybe there'll be more. Maybe there will be more. I understand there will be. But, well, one of the things you don't do is talk about it in public, so—

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Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, there's an old saying that if you want to go fast, you go alone, but if you want to go far, you go as a team. New Brunswickers need to go far. We have a big gap to overcome in terms of people not getting care in our health care system, our educational results with literacy and numeracy for our students, and the number of people who are unhoused or are waiting for the appropriate housing for the system.

We need to go far. Here, we have a Premier who wants to go it alone. He himself has said: Hardline positions get taken, but I am the Premier. We see that his team has left him. He's had to import talent from Ontario. He's had to force staffers to move into political roles. When is the Premier going to change his ways?

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to stand and talk today because the member from the opposite side started talking about short-term and long-term goals. I want to talk about the *Housing for All* strategy. This is a document for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation to move forward over the next four years to provide housing for New Brunswickers, including public housing, social housing, and market housing.

Mr. Speaker, there are 22 different items within that where we are putting funding in place, putting programs in place, and working collaboratively with stakeholders across the province to provide suitable, appropriate, safe housing for all New Brunswickers.

Mr. Speaker, that is a long-term plan. It is a long-term strategy with immediate results. So this is how it is done. You set a strategy and goals, and you move forward, as we are doing with the *Housing for All* strategy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for rising to speak for a moment. I know there is a lot of frustration about her work, especially with regard to the housing strategy. I have heard chambers of commerce say that the government has taken no action and that they are seeing bureaucracy created; they are seeing consultation without action. The government needs to take bold action but would rather create strategies without objectives or deadlines and brag about them.

[*Original*]

This is what the government is doing while we have more people waiting for housing, more people who are homeless in this province. But New Brunswickers see through this. They



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see through the talk with no action. They see through the Premier talking about change when he is doing things in exactly the same way that politicians are doing them all across the country: Create fear. New Brunswickers are afraid. New Brunswickers are afraid of how they are going to pay their bills. They are afraid of how they are going to pay their mortgages and how they are going to get health care. They want to know when the Premier will give them a chance to—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Time.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, members. Members, thank you.

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The *Housing for All* strategy has goals for our team. It works collaboratively with all the stakeholders—the municipalities, the chambers of commerce, the private sector, and the not-for-profit sector. Within a year, there will be 208 new public housing units that will house over 400 New Brunswickers. We have put forward more than half a billion dollars over the next three years toward housing for New Brunswickers. Mr. Speaker, we are making real change—real change—in housing, and I am incredibly proud of that. We are working collaboratively with all the stakeholders. This is how you set a strategy, this is how you follow the strategy, and this is how you get things done.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Well, for the final time, question period is over. Members, we will revert to the Order of Introduction of Guests.