

December 9, 2014

[Original]

## Shale Gas

**Mr. Fitch:** During the reply to the speech from the throne last Friday, I mentioned a new book that was released by Richard Saillant, entitled *Shale Gas in New Brunswick: Towards a Better Understanding*, which is part of the Roméo LeBlanc series. I know the Premier was sent a copy. I just wondered: Did the Premier take time out of his Christmas cocktail circuit tour to read this book?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I did. I can tell you that many of the things that we have heard about shale gas and, more specifically, hydraulic fracturing over the past few years have come from reports and books. Many authors have written about this subject. We recognize that there are some that fall on different sides of the spectrum. Some will fall with more concern, and some will fall with, hopefully, what they think of as more answers. We recognize that, and we read everything that we possibly can when it comes to hydraulic fracturing. This is an important debate in our province, in our country, and even across North America. We recognize that.

[Translation]

That is why we were very transparent about the position of our party during the campaign. We very clearly said that there would be a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing until we understand the risks associated with this practice for our drinking water, our health, and our environment.

Actually, we will be very happy to respect this commitment during the upcoming session by tabling a bill to place a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing.

[Original]

**Mr. Fitch:** I want to thank the Premier for his speech. Now that I know he has read the book, that is perfect. We have a chance to talk about it and to talk about some of the projections that were made by David Campbell, who wrote Chapter 1. David Campbell, as you know, is part of Jupia Consultants. We have mentioned those consultants in the House before, and the Premier has blamed—I mean, mentioned—they in public in the past as well.

I wonder whether the Premier would care to comment on the projections—specifically, those on page 60—with respect to the shale gas industry and the potential to create \$1.3 billion to \$1.8 billion of GDP growth or the 5 900 to 7 900 potential jobs for the shale gas industry. Does the Premier feel that the projections that are mentioned on page 60 are inaccurate?



**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** As we know, a lot of the things that have been discussed regarding domestic shale gas and hydraulic fracturing are speculative. There is still no indication of what type of deposit there is or whether there is a deposit at all. It is unfortunate that we have heard the opposition members talking during the campaign and even today as if all of this is a done deal. I believe that we have to give the facts to New Brunswickers.

The facts are that we have a diversified approach to growing the economy. We do not have the fixation that the Conservative Party has had with hydraulic fracturing over the past few years. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition cannot contemplate how we can have a job creation plan, one that will deliver real results and one that will help New Brunswickers work and stay in the province, that does not include hydraulic fracturing. It includes a skilled workforce, investing in infrastructure, strategies for tourism and immigration, and ensuring that we have a one-stop shop for economic development. It will create jobs. It will get our province moving forward. It will help our economy.

**Mr. Fitch:** I think that is part of the whole point behind the book and part of the discussion that we are having. The Premier talks about it being a done deal. The whole point of moving forward is to be able to answer the questions, to find out exactly the size of the resource that we have there and what the benefits of that resource would be. In terms of the projections that are made within Chapter 1, I guess the Premier is saying that they are accurate enough. They are accurate enough that we can talk about them. He has said that they are speculation or that they are projections.

## Pipeline

Let's talk about the reality of some of the things that we are seeing in the marketplace right now. Yesterday, a barrel of oil reached a five-year low of just over US\$63 per barrel. That has dropped by almost 40% since midsummer. As we look at some of the ideas that the Premier is copying from us—because we talked about the west-east pipeline, the Sisson mine, and a variety of diversified approaches to job creation—does the Premier tell us how a \$63 barrel of oil affects his plan for the west-east pipeline?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I did not know that the Leader of the Opposition invented the Sisson Brook mine. If that is the case, then that is great, and we are happy to support it. If the Sisson Brook mine was the opposition's idea, we are happy to say that we are reaching across party lines to support the project—when it can be done responsibly, create jobs for New Brunswickers, and ensure that we get our economy rolling. Also, we very much support the Energy East pipeline, and I am certainly hopeful that it is still the case, that the opposition supports the Energy East pipeline as well. I have no reason to think otherwise. Obviously, the dip in prices has all of us looking. We want to make sure that the industry does not make any long-term decisions based on these fluctuations. We have seen fluctuations in the past. We are going to continue to talk about the benefits of the Energy East pipeline.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.



**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** We are going to continue to work hard to make sure that it is done the right way, that it makes its way to New Brunswick and to Saint John, and that we can benefit as much as possible with all the job creation opportunities that it can bring.

**Mr. Fitch:** On September 8, during the election, the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is now the Premier, said—and, in case anybody in New Brunswick has not seen the clip on the media, I quote—“In the first year of a Liberal government, we would create 5 000 jobs within our plan”. There were no net jobs, no gross jobs, and no economist that he could blame. Now, there is a big asterisk right beside that statement of our plan. If he has a plan, there are obviously parameters that he would use to make those projections of 5 000 jobs. In his plan, where did the Liberal Party peg a barrel of oil? Again, we know that it is at \$63, and we know that this could affect the west-east pipeline. At least, we would make that assumption because, again, when this was being done, a barrel of oil was almost north of \$100. How does a \$63 barrel of oil affect the plan that was referred to—now with a big asterisk—on September 8?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, member.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I really appreciate the question, because it gives us the opportunity to find out that the opposition members, just like their government when they were in office, get their ideas from other sources. Unfortunately, these sources are not always on the same wavelength.

[*Original*]

During the campaign, we actually trusted the Jupia Consultants report that was done by the previous government. In fact, there is no doubt that many of the jobs that we talk about creating in our plan came from that report. We trusted the government of the time and, more specifically, Jupia Consultants to do a good job of analyzing some of the projects. They analyzed the Energy East pipeline, the Sisson Brook mine, the LNG terminal conversion, and some other projects to talk about how many jobs would be created and what the impact would be on the GDP. We relied on Jupia Consultants, as the Conservatives did at the time, and that was where that number came from. Therefore, the Leader of the Opposition is in as good a place as I would be to answer that question.

## Shale Gas

**Mr. Fitch:** It is nice that the Premier finally admitted that we were on a diversified approach to job creation in New Brunswick, but one of those approaches was the shale gas industry. In the same report, as the Premier just mentioned—it is credible—there was a projection of 5 000 jobs. Now, given the fact that the barrel of oil is at a five-year low and that this could affect some of the projects that were mentioned in there, why is the Premier turning his back on one of those diverse portfolio options—the shale gas industry? Why is he turning his back on that? It is because, now, his job plan, his idea, of 5 000 jobs in the first year of his mandate is in



jeopardy. Why is he turning his back on an opportunity that could create thousands and thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in the GDP growth in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** To illustrate this group's fixation on fracking, I think the question says it all. We have discussed this so many times over the past few months and years. The Leader of the Opposition is well aware of our preoccupations, some of the things that we are concerned about, and the legitimate questions of New Brunswickers and people across the country and North America when it comes to hydraulic fracturing.

*[Translation]*

So, I want to take this opportunity to say once again to the Leader of the Opposition that, when he was Minister of Economic Development, he always distinguished between the number of jobs created following government investments and the number of jobs that were actually created in total.

*[Original]*

The Leader of the Opposition, when he was a minister, made the following very clear: When we criticized the fact that there was a net loss when it came to job creation under the previous government, they said that they created jobs nonetheless. The Leader of the Opposition knows very well the difference between creating jobs and having a net gain of jobs. We promised that we would create jobs, and that is exactly what we will do.

## Government Agenda

**Mr. Fitch:** That goes to the point that I was making here today. The Premier stands up and says that jobs and the economy are their number one priority. Some of his ministers and his backbenchers stand up and say the same thing: Jobs and the economy are the number one priority. They have to put an asterisk at the end of that to say that jobs and the economy are the number one priority, but that they do not want to look at 5 000 to 7 000 additional jobs that there could be in New Brunswick, creating over \$1 billion of GDP growth every year.

When the Premier stands up, will he qualify this statement, just as he had to qualify his number of 5 000 jobs? Every time he says that jobs and the economy are the number one priority, will he put an asterisk at the end of it, because we know that, in fact, it is not the case now?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I believe there lies the difference between the opposition and this government. Job creation is our priority—absolutely—but we do not do it by putting a blindfold over our eyes and putting our fingers in our ears. If people have concerns, if people have questions, if people want to make sure that we are going to do it in a responsible way, we are going to make sure that we listen to them to grow our economy in a sustainable way. For the Leader of the Opposition to say that it is either all jobs and nothing else or bust, I think, is unfortunate. Frankly, this, again, illustrates the fixation on fracking.



Why can the Leader of the Opposition, instead of debating whose priority of job creation is the greater, ours or theirs... Let's say that we both have that as our main priority. Why can we not talk about how we can work on our main priority, the priority of New Brunswickers—creating jobs, growing the economy, and getting people working?

**Mr. Fitch:** We would be more than happy to join the Premier, and our jobs and the economy would be the same, if he removed the asterisk to say that he will not put a moratorium on the shale gas industry, which is not a fixation. It is just an obvious opportunity for New Brunswick, which needs to move forward. That is what we are saying.

Will the Premier stop the moratorium and really mean that jobs and the economy are the number one priority in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I believe that I have answered that question already.

*[Translation]*

So, I am going to take my time and list for the Leader of the Opposition the things that we are doing, given that job creation is our priority.

*[Original]*

Does the Leader of the Opposition agree that we, at least as an opposition and a government, all have, in this Legislature, job creation and growing the economy as our priority? That is great. We can work together. Do he and his group support making sure that we have the smallest Cabinet since 1965 and making sure that we lower the small business tax? Does he support the Jobs Board, which we created to coordinate job creation efforts, or Opportunities NB, a one-stop shop which ensures that we are client-focused when it comes to growing the economy?

*[Translation]*

Does the opposition support the Youth Employment Fund initiative? Like us, do they want more regional cooperation in the Atlantic Provinces? Do they support the Energy East Pipeline project, the conversion of the Canaport LNG terminal, and the Sisson Brook mines?

*[Original]*

Do we support these together, and can we work together?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, Mr. Premier.

**Mr. Fitch:** We can certainly work together, and we would like to make some changes to some of the issues that the Premier has brought forward. I think these would be positive because he is



bulldozing the foundation that we built upon when it comes to organizations such as Invest NB and others that have had a great track record.

The conclusion that I would like to make today is that, every time the Liberals, their Cabinet ministers, and their backbenchers stand up and say that jobs and the economy are their number one priority, they have to put the asterisk at the end of it to say: We will not look at an opportunity to create 5 000 to 7 000 jobs. We will not look at the opportunity to create over \$1 billion in GDP growth. We will not look at an opportunity to make sure that New Brunswick becomes a “have” province, especially given the climate of the market that we have today.

That is what we need to agree on. When we say “jobs and the economy”, we have a diversified portfolio to which we want to move forward. However, the Premier has to put an asterisk on it. He has to put a “but” after “jobs and the economy” because he is not being truly honest with the people of the province.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I am sure it happened to me as well when I was Leader of the Opposition, but I do not believe there was a question in there. I will take this time to reiterate my question. Do the Leader of the Opposition and the group opposite support us in our diversified approach to creating jobs?

I think we have established over the last two years that we do not necessarily agree when it comes to hydraulic fracturing. I think New Brunswickers have noticed that during the campaign and over the past few months. Do they agree with us on having the smallest Cabinet in about 40 years, on lowering the small business tax, on the Youth Employment Fund, on Opportunities New Brunswick, on the Sisson Brook mine, on the Energy East pipeline, and on ensuring that we have the conversion of the LNG terminal? This is something that we barely heard the opposition members talk about when they were in government because it undercut their argument that we needed the best domestic supply of shale gas here. Do they support our diversified approach to growing the economy, creating jobs, and getting New Brunswickers to work here in our province?

[*Translation*]

## **Vitalité Health Network**

**Ms. Dubé:** Last week, I drew the attention of the House to the fact that the Minister of Health had told New Brunswickers, by way of a letter to Vitalité Health Network, that the health network was not prepared to serve the people of the province in the event that patients suffered from a serious or even fatal disease, namely the Ebola virus.

I would like to give the minister another chance to answer our question today, since he has had a few days to reflect on the situation. Can the minister tell us today, in order to alleviate people’s anxiety, if Vitalité Health Network would be able to meet the needs of New Brunswickers suffering from the Ebola virus?



**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** Once again, the member opposite is referring to a letter when, as I have mentioned over and over again, inside and outside the House, I cannot discuss the content of the letter. So, I will maintain my position, and I will not discuss the content of this letter.

With regard to the Ebola virus, no cases have been reported so far in New Brunswick or Canada, so we think the risk is minimal. That being said, New Brunswick is working with the federal government and the other provinces to make sure that we would be prepared if cases were ever reported here.

**Ms. Dubé:** I find what the Minister of Health says terrible. As Minister of Health, his words have some impact. A letter was published, which mentioned that Vitalité Health Network was not prepared to serve the people of New Brunswick in the event that a patient suffered from the Ebola virus.

Today, we can certainly read that physicians themselves have spoken publicly, because they are stunned by the minister's attitude. The minister is hiding behind the human resource issue, as he did last week. The only problem in terms of human resources at the Department of Health might be the minister himself.

In this case, this is a serious situation. Physicians tell us, in the newspapers, that they are prepared and that a tremendous amount of work has been done. I am again asking the minister if we should listen to the physicians. They do tell us that a lot of work has been done. They tell us that everything has been done and that everything is prepared. However, in a letter that was published, the Minister of Health tells us...

*[Original]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** This is the fifth time that the member opposite has asked me the same question, so I will give her the same answer. She keeps referring to a letter, even though I cannot, for very obvious reasons, discuss its content. It is confidential information; it is that simple.

With regard to the Ebola virus question, I can tell you that, right now, there is no apparent risk of the disease appearing anywhere in New Brunswick, or in Canada. We are not aware of any cases reported in New Brunswick. The province and the Communicable Disease Control Branch are working with the other provinces and the federal government to make sure that the province is prepared, should such a case arise in New Brunswick.

**Ms. Dubé:** Where should I begin? If a problem arises—I agree that we do not have one today, thank goodness—we have a minister who once said to the public: We are not prepared; the



Vitalité Health Network is not prepared to serve the people. It is the minister himself who said it. However, doctors tell us that, yes, they are prepared and that preparations have been made.

The minister is mistaken. The Vitalité Health Network is prepared. Again, the minister is making people feel unsafe. There are two divergent positions.

My last question for the minister today is about the designation of a hospital. We have a request from the federal government to designate hospitals that are prepared to meet demand in case of infectious disease. In New Brunswick, we have a designated hospital prepared to do the screening, perform the diagnosis, and provide treatment for the disease. This designation comes from the Department of Health. However, the minister of Health says that we are not prepared.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, member.

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I have answered the question five times now in French, so maybe I will try to answer it in English. It might help the member across the way. She continuously refers to a letter that I cannot discuss publicly because of the confidential and personal nature of that letter. It is an HR issue.

That being said, I can tell you with certainty that there are no cases of Ebola reported in New Brunswick or in Canada. I can also assure you that, as a province, we are working with other provinces and with the federal government to make sure that if a case is ever identified, either in New Brunswick or elsewhere in Canada, we, as a province, will be prepared to deal with that situation. Thank you.

**Mr. Jody Carr:** To follow up on my colleague, the MLA for Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, and to get further clarity on this, what we are hearing today is that, recently, the Minister of Health stated publicly that he has concerns about how well prepared the health officials are in the Vitalité Health Network. Today, we have the health officials saying otherwise in public, French newspapers. In fact, the Minister of Health is now contradicting himself.

The questions that we have are very serious. The health officials are saying that the Minister of Health is erroneous in his claims. People need to have confidence in this government. How can the minister explain the difference of opinion now between him and the health officials of the Vitalité Health Network? Should the public be concerned? How well prepared are the officials this week regarding the Ebola breakout?

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** Just because a different member asks the question does not mean that he is going to get a different answer. I can continue repeating the same answer for as long as question period goes on if that is the desire of the opposition. I cannot get into the specifics of the letter that they keep referencing, but I can tell them that, in this province, there has been





no case of Ebola reported to date. No case of Ebola has been reported in Canada. I can tell you that our disease control centre is working with other provinces and with the federal government to make sure that if a case were to present itself here in New Brunswick, we would be prepared to deal with that case.

**Mr. Jody Carr:** Clearly, the Minister of Health did not say that in the letter that was published, the letter that was refuted by the health officials today in French newspapers. The Minister of Health raised serious questions about the preparedness of the health officials in the Vitalité Health Network in New Brunswick regarding the Ebola virus. Today, the doctors and health professionals of Vitalité have said that the minister is making erroneous claims.

This, now, leads one to question who is telling the truth. Are the doctors and health officials not prepared for an Ebola outbreak? The minister has said that, if they are not prepared, he has the moral, ethical, and ministerial responsibility to update this House and to give details on how he felt that the regional health authority was not prepared. If the doctors and health officials are telling the truth, which they cited in the French newspaper today, then the professional integrity of the Gallant government is at risk.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, member.

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I can continue to repeat the same answer. Nothing has changed. I saw the release that the member opposite is referring to, and that release refers to the letter that I am not able to talk about because of its personal and confidential nature. I do not know how many times I can repeat this. The two members who have just asked questions are former ministers. They should know the rules. They should know that, as minister, I cannot discuss something like this. The reasons why I cannot talk about this letter have been well reported in the media. I am not going to talk about the letter, but I do want to reassure New Brunswickers that, as we talk here today, there is still not a single case of Ebola reported in New Brunswick or in Canada. However, our Communicable Disease Control Branch is actively working with other provinces and with the federal government.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, minister.

**Mr. Jody Carr:** The minister has not cleared the air today. In fact, he has muddied the waters. At the risk of public safety and also damage to the public reputation and the professional competence of the doctors and health officials in the Vitalité Health Network, the Minister of Health has said publicly that the health professionals in the Vitalité health authority are not prepared for an Ebola outbreak. This has raised questions and concerns on the part of the professionals in the Vitalité health authority that what the Gallant government has done by raising concerns has irresponsibly damaged the reputation of the fine health professionals of the Vitalité health authority. He has also raised alarms for public health and safety.



Could the Minister of Health answer this: Why would he do this? Could he acknowledge that what the Gallant government has done is damaging the reputation of the health professionals in the Vitalité Health Network?

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I know that, when those members were on this side of the House, on more than one occasion, there was personal and confidential information leaked. However, I am not going to do that. I have been very clear that I cannot discuss the contents of that letter, so I am going to keep repeating... I am going to put the opposition members on notice. I am going to keep repeating the exact same answer, so, if they want to continue asking the same question and if they want to eat up question period by asking the same question over and over, I will gladly do that. However, I am not going to comment on the contents of that letter because it is an HR issue. It is considered personal and confidential, and the answer is going to remain the same every single time they ask that question. Thank you.

### Public Safety

**Mr. Northrup:** To say that I was disappointed in this government last week would be an understatement. In a letter to Poley Mountain, the Public Safety minister said that making a helmets law at ski hills is best left to the ski hills. Did he even read the file? Ski hill operators acknowledged that they would create a rule and implement it, but that it would have more teeth if the government of the day would help them along. Legislation was ready to go in October, but, with this new government... Did it come from the Public Safety minister, or did it come out of the Premier's Office? This is in the mandate letter that the minister got from the Premier: "work collaboratively on major policy initiatives and communication issues". I ask: Is this decision one that the Premier has ordered?

**Hon. Mr. Horsman:** I thank the member opposite because this gives me the opportunity, at this time, to rise in the House and personally thank the citizens of Fredericton North, who have given me the privilege to represent them here...

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Horsman:** I look forward to meeting the challenges together, to better enhance employment and fiscal responsibility, and to better enhance and create a better life for families here in New Brunswick. As Minister of Public Safety, my first priority, after 25 years of policing, is the public safety and the well-being of all citizens of Fredericton, New Brunswick.

I want to thank those at Poley Mountain for taking the initiative to impose the mandatory order that all participants wear helmets. We have reached out to three other ski hills throughout the province. Instead of the 90% to 95% of the people who are already wearing helmets, we want to see that number at 100%.





# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick Oral Questions

**Mr. Speaker:** The time for question period has expired.

