

February 19, 2015

[Original]

Hiring

Mr. Fitch: The cost of the politically motivated rebranding of Invest NB and the Department of Economic Development keeps adding up. Last week, we heard about the hiring of a new CEO. Now, we see the hiring of three more deputy minister-level positions. We wonder whether the Premier could clarify some of the processes involved in the hiring for those three positions. We saw the advertisement on the Knightsbridge Robertson Surette Web site about a position for secretary, but did not see the position for chief economist or the other one. I wonder whether the Premier could give us some insight as to how this process came about, which ended up with the hiring of three people.

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: As we have said several times, when we hire people to direct our Crown corporations, we base our decisions on competencies and merit.

Listening to the questions from opposition members, I am wondering whether they are saying that Susan Holt, David Campbell, and Jacques Pinet do not have the required competencies and do not deserve the positions they have just accepted. They are three incredibly competent people with a lot of experience. They are three people who have, for a long time now, been helping us grow the economy and contributing to public discussions in the province on the way to go about doing so. I am so proud that these three people have chosen to join us and help achieve our primary goal, which is to create jobs.

I can tell you that I understand these three people even took a pay cut to come and help us achieve our primary goal. This is the kind of people we need to help us grow the economy. Our government is very proud that these three people have accepted this role.

[Original]

Mr. Fitch: I appreciate that speech from the Premier. Again, I have known two out of the three, for sure. I know their capabilities very well.

However, I simply asked a question. They advertised for one position, and they ended up with three. Were these not open positions? Were they just appointed by the Premier's Office? We know that, in the mandate letter, the Premier has all hirings and firings going through his office.

The public want to know, because there could be other people who may have wanted to apply for these jobs. We just want to understand the process a little bit better for the sake of the



people in the business community who are interested in moving the province forward. Were these positions advertised, or were they just appointed out of the Premier's Office?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The recruitment process was independent. As the Leader of the Opposition just mentioned, Robertson Surette reviewed many resumé and considered a number of people, as was also the case for Opportunities New Brunswick, before recommending these three candidates.

In fact, I have just met Stephen Lund—after he was appointed—who will be the Chief Executive Officer of the Crown corporation Opportunities New Brunswick. Although there were several good candidates, it seemed obvious to Robertson Surette that Stephen Lund was the person we needed to hire to help create jobs and grow the economy with Opportunities New Brunswick.

Robertson Surette helped us select the four people who were hired to help us with economic growth and job creation. Stephen Lund, Susan Holt, David Campbell, and Jacques Pinet are up to the task and will help us enormously. I am proud to have them with us.

[Original]

Mr. Fitch: Again, I am familiar with some of the people who were hired. Susan Holt was a stakeholder when she was working as the CEO of the New Brunswick Business Council. We met many times, and, again, there was a good working relationship there. I understand her capabilities.

David Campbell wrote the report *Our Path to a Stronger New Brunswick*, which was released in June, before the election. It was so good that it was adopted by the present government. The government ripped out a few pages on shale gas and trumped it as its own report.

I am very familiar with the first two people. I am not familiar with the third person. I wonder about the Premier saying last week that he had not met Stephen Lund. I wonder whether he can tell us this: Has he met all three people who were hired here, out of his office?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Again, it was an independent process, an independent business, Robertson Surette, that got the names and did the search. I am very happy with the people we have landed for the Jobs Board. Susan Holt, David Campbell, and Jacques Pinet are three individuals whom I did know before.

I have met Jacques, when he was the vice-president of Assumption Life. I have met David Campbell before as well, when he still had a role with NB2026. I have met Susan Holt, of course, in her role with the Business Council. Absolutely, I have met all three individuals. I think that



they are phenomenal at what they do, and I think they are going to do a phenomenal job in helping us with the Jobs Board.

I have to ask this of the Leader of the Opposition: Does he believe that these three individuals do not have the competence and experience that it takes to help us create jobs and grow the economy through the positions that they have accepted on the Jobs Board?

Mr. Fitch: The Premier wants to ask the questions. Again, this is question period, and he is supposed to answer them. It is a simple question of process.

There are many, many people out in the business community. This is not a question of the capabilities of these three people. It is simply a question of process. I have people who have asked me: Were these jobs posted? Were they open competitions? Were they not?

We know that there was one under Robertson Surette for a secretary. That was posted on the Web. The question is with regard to the other two positions, the chief economist and the other one. We are just wondering: Were these actually posted in any way, shape, or form by the government?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I have to take issue with the last comments of the Leader of the Opposition. He says that I am not answering his questions. He asked if I had met with the individuals, and I said yes. I am not convinced that it can be any clearer than that. He asked me what the process was. There was an independent process. Robertson Surette came with these names and did the interviews. Again, I told the anecdote of the CEO of Opportunities New Brunswick being someone I had not even met. Then, they asked if I had met the three others, and I had. I am answering the questions.

Frankly, it was so independent that I cannot answer any more than that. Robertson Surette personnel took on this headhunting process, and they were the ones who interviewed people. I cannot even tell you how many applied. I do not know. I was not involved. There was an independent process. I am told that there were interviews. I am told that there are some people who, unfortunately, were not accepted and were not asked to play this role.

What I can tell you is that we have four individuals coming from the private sector who have the experience and know-how to help us create jobs and grow the economy. I am very proud that they want to be a part of all that we are doing.

Mr. Fitch: Once again, this is a question of process. There were two advertisements—one for a secretary and one for the CEO of Opportunities New Brunswick. They ended up with four positions. We are just trying to understand the process that the Premier and the government put forward. Did he advertise for two? Did he advertise for four? What kind of conversation occurred to go from two to four? It is a process question. It is not an attack on the individuals who are named here today—unlike what the government members did when they were in opposition.



Hon. Mr. Gallant: I have to take issue with what was said there. They say that, when we were in opposition, we talked about the process. Well, we did not talk very long, because there was no process when those people were in power.

Again, I have answered the question. It is an independent process. Robertson Surette did the interviews and got the names. I do not even know how many people applied. It is as frank as that, so I will go on to something that was said on the floor of the Legislature that I want to address.

Yet again, during members' statements, opposition members were accusing us of trying to muzzle their members' statements. Unfortunately, it seems that the Opposition House Leader has not talked to her colleagues. This morning, we actually offered to make an amendment to allow them to keep members' statements the way they are. It is not something that we believe is in our best interest, because we have seen how deplorable the members' statements have been in the last few days. Still, if that is their biggest concern, we are willing to compromise. We told the House Leader that this morning, yet they spent their members' statements talking about how we are trying to muzzle them. We have offered the amendment. Do they accept it?

Mr. Speaker: Time, Premier.

Mr. Fitch: Once again, the Premier talks about an independent process—an independent process that was so independent that he did not know how many were interviewed or who were released. At some point in time, Robertson Surette must have come back to the Premier and said: I know you advertised for only one person, but we are going to hire three. How did that process occur? Robertson Surette was asked to advertise for one position, but the government ended up with three. Could the Premier please explain how that process worked?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We asked Robertson Surette to get us the best names to help us with the Jobs Boards and Opportunities New Brunswick. Frankly, I think that is exactly what it did. It was an independent process, and there are phenomenal individuals who are going to help us grow the economy and create jobs.

What I would love to say is that, of the four people we hired, not one of them ran for the leadership of the Liberal Party. Is that not something?

I asked the opposition members a question, and I would like to have them answer, only because they brought it up in three out of five members' statements, if I am not mistaken. We have proposed an amendment regarding members' statements so that the statements of the opposition and the government can be about whatever they would like. Unfortunately, the response from the opposition has not been very constructive.

Mr. Speaker: Order.



Hon. Mr. Gallant: We are willing to compromise on that, yet they criticized us again in their members' statements. Will they accept and unanimously pass an amendment?

Mr. Fitch: There again, the Premier says one thing and does another. He talks about us attacking the people who were hired here, and we did not. We just asked about the process. Two positions were not advertised, yet they were filled. We are asking on behalf of members of the business community who might have wanted to be involved in that process and to be considered for those positions.

Unfortunately, the Premier turns around and attacks people that we hired. Once again, the members of this government are going to the lowest of the low when they say that we are attacking people that they hired, and we are not.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fitch: Yet, they attack people that we hired. Once again, it looks as if there are two sets of rules: one for us and one for them. Unfortunately, they are the ones who like to break the rules.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I have to defend these people, obviously, because I think that they are very competent. I think that they merit the positions that they have. Unfortunately, the opposition does not seem to think that that is the case. I do not know what members of the business community the Opposition Leader is talking to. The emails and calls that I got were from people who were dumbfounded. They were completely flabbergasted that we were able to recruit these four people to come and help us.

The reason is that you have one economist who, obviously, is a very senior individual, someone with a lot of experience who did work for the previous Conservative government and did work for our platform. He did work for both of us because he is good. He is good at what he does. With Stephen Lund, we are bringing a Saint Johner back to New Brunswick, a guy who did so much in Nova Scotia in creating jobs. Susan Holt knows the businesses and the exporters in our province better than anyone, and Jacques Pinet, who is the vice-president focused on sales for Assumption Life, knows what it takes to sell New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker: Time, Premier.

Legislative Reform

Mr. B. Macdonald: Well, the Premier told us yesterday that he does not even understand his own rule changes. It makes me wonder who is holding the red pen on this. It concerns me that some unelected puppet master in the Premier's Office is, in fact, pulling the strings here. It is clear that the executive branch wants to silence us here, and that is why the Premier is



imposing that members' statements be limited only to their constituents. When emails go out in Moncton soliciting patronage for members of the Liberal Party, it is the people of Fredericton West-Hanwell who pay. When the Minister of Health wants to divert \$4 million from Fredericton's Chalmers hospital to Moncton, Chaleur, and Bathurst, it is the people of Fredericton West-Hanwell who suffer.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. B. Macdonald: It is my fear that these rule changes are actually a way to silence us so we cannot follow where the money goes. Does the Premier agree that members should be able to speak about whatever they want, whenever they want?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: First, I am writing my notes over here with a blue pen, so the member could be corrected there. Second, I think it is very important that... I understand that the opposition members are new to their role. Obviously, they have to do a better job of getting their talking points.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Member for Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: They have their questions prepared in advance, I am sure, and they are not listening to the answers over here. We actually made it quite clear, just about four minutes ago, that we are willing to change the change to the members' statements that we were proposing. We are willing to put in an amendment that will allow them to keep the members' statements as they are. I actually just said that. For the member opposite to say that we are trying to muzzle them again, I think, is unfortunate.

Is the member opposite in a position to talk for his colleagues and say that they will help us pass, unanimously, the amendment for them to be able to continue members' statements as they are? If he wants me to answer the question, sure. We will very much allow them to talk about whatever under the sun they would like. Will they accept?

Mr. B. Macdonald: What is happening here is absolutely fascinating to me. We have an inexperienced Premier who is making up policy and procedures on the fly. He knows that he is in government and that it is his job to answer the questions, yet almost every question today, he has asked of the opposition. Well, I will happily change places with you, Mr. Premier.

I will tell you what: There is a process in this House, and the fact that you have just said yourself that you are introducing an amendment does not make it an amendment. You are not supposed to introduce amendments in question period. You are supposed to introduce them during the committee phase of a bill, or as a motion on the floor of this Legislature.



(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. B. Macdonald: It is clear that this Premier does not understand the process that is used in this House. Not only that, even worse, he is manipulating that process even here today, to suit his own ends. I want this Premier to go back to the drawing board on these rule changes, to take a blank slate, to involve the public and involve academics, and to get to the root of what needs to be changed in this Legislature, because there is plenty. Stop making it up on the fly. What does he have to say about that?

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We did not say that we wanted to change the legislation right now. We said that we were willing. In fact, our House Leader and Deputy House Leader have had conversations. They have talked to the Opposition House Leader and said that we are willing to propose an amendment to get rid of the members' statements change, the one that they seem to be very concerned about. I want to make it very clear. The members opposite have been harping on this for quite some time. We have said that we are willing to compromise on that one issue. Now, they get up and still talk about that issue as if it is their biggest concern.

It is as though they are not hearing when we say that we want to work with them. We will give that one to them. We will compromise on that. With the amendment that we are proposing and that we are willing to propose—or they can propose it; it does not matter—we will unanimously support it and pass it. One of their concerns will be met. We are willing to work with the opposition, the leader of the third party, and all New Brunswickers to better our province. Will the opposition help us and pass this legislation?

Mr. B. Macdonald: I am happy to review the comments that are on record as to what the Premier said in the last few minutes. I am sure that it will give us all clarity. It is important to note that there are now two days left to debate on this motion. Finally, the Premier is coming to the table with some changes. He is throwing us a bone, but not really dealing with the core issue.

Now that he has conceded one point, I would like to see him perhaps concede some more. It is my fear that these rule changes are actually designed to make sure that there are fewer sitting days in this Legislature. That means fewer question periods, fewer opportunities for this debate and for us to question the government.

As we have learned already this week, it took three days in question period to get the Minister of Health to finally admit where the \$4 million for the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital was actually going. That is why we have question period. That is the function.



The Premier enjoyed those privileges when he was sitting over here. Will he now guarantee this Legislature that there will be at least as many sitting days in the future as he enjoyed when he was in opposition? Will he at least put in place a sessional calendar to make sure that we have enough question periods to question his absolute power? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The member opposite said that he would like to review what I said. What I said is not very complicated. We proposed a change when it comes to members' statements. The opposition members have gotten up on their feet on the floor of the Legislature. They did not want to talk to us when we wanted to meet with them in committee. They come onto the floor of the Legislature and repeatedly say that is one of the biggest concerns that they have with the changes. We are willing to compromise and take that off the table. It is as simple as that. There is not much to review.

What we are saying is that we are willing to propose an amendment to our changes to ensure that members' statements stay exactly the way that they were today. It is unfortunate that we have to continue to listen to the lowering of the decorum by the opposition with their members' statements, but we are willing to compromise on that. There is not much to review.

All they have to say is this: We have been complaining about something. You have now offered it, and we are willing to accept. Will they vote on their subamendment to allow us to propose this amendment so that we can unanimously support it and give them something that they have been complaining about?

Invest NB

Mr. K. MacDonald: My question today is the for the Minister of Economic Development. He is such a quotable individual. He is quoted as saying:

As a model, Invest NB has demonstrated what can be achieved when investment promotion is continuously focused on achieving targets, measuring success and streamlining internal processes to ensure optimal efficiency.

My question today for the Minister of Economic Development is this: If Invest NB was such a model of success and efficiency, why did your government rip it apart?

Hon. Mr. Doucet: Look, jobs are our number one priority. It is really great to be part of a team that is focused on that. I remember signing that document, and I agree with those points. The fact of the matter is that we are dealing with a tremendous amount of patchwork with regard to economic development agencies.

Now, let's take the good things that Invest NB has been doing. Let's formulate it together with one economic development agency under Opportunities New Brunswick. Let's be client-based. Let's be focused. Let's be targeted in our mandate. Let's create jobs. As a matter of fact, Invest



NB has been doing a great job. We have never said anything was wrong with that operation. As a matter of fact, we can bring it all together and do it right.

Mr. K. MacDonald: Invest NB has done a wonderful job—\$450 million to the provincial GDP, for 154% of its target, and \$98.6 million in capital expenditures, for 116% of its target. Invest New Brunswick has delivered results.

All of a sudden, this government pulled the plug. In doing so, you have created a void. There have been no job announcements in the province for the past four months. Is the minister not doing his job? How is the department managing the void created by the absence of Invest NB and the active files that it was working on?

Hon. Mr. Doucet: I would like to thank the member opposite for that question. He is kind of all over the map, but that is all right.

Job creation is our number one priority. By bringing Invest NB in with Opportunities New Brunswick under one roof, we are not going to have this confusing patchwork for our clients to work with. Look, as far as I am concerned, in terms of those targets that were met, we are going to exceed that because we are going to be working together. The synergies that we have going with Invest NB and the synergies that we have going with the Economic Development staff... I have seen nothing but a tremendously focused group of people that can get the job done. Are we going to set some targets? There are going to be high expectations, but they will all work together, and we will do the job.

Mr. K. MacDonald: Once again, this minister is overcommitting and underdelivering.

Getting back to Invest NB, it created more than 2 400 jobs in New Brunswick over the course of its mandate, with annual salaries of over \$37 000 per year. You do not have to take my word for that. That is backed up by the Auditor General of the province.

Four months have passed with no announcements from the minister. What has been going on? I guess it may have been lobster fishing season in the province. Is the minister deliberately withholding job announcements until after April 1, when Opportunities New Brunswick is in place, in a thinly veiled attempt to praise this floundering government and its job creation record?

Hon. Mr. Doucet: I have to tell you something. We are turning over every rock and leaf. We are working with our groups. There will not be many offices that you will go into where you will find any of our staff, because they are out talking to clients, trying to find ways to grow their business.

I know that you people seem to be mesmerized by this job tracker that you have, this system that you have. It needs a little bit of tweaking. I think that you have to do a little bit of work on it. If you want to help with job creation, we have some very innovative people out there who



could help you with that system. They could build on it and actually give you real-time management, because that is part of our diversified economy. We have some innovation right here in this province that could help out your office quite a bit.

Oil and Gas Leases

Mr. Stewart: We have to wonder why the Energy Minister claimed on Tuesday that he has the same powers under the existing Act that are provided to him under Bill 9. Simple logic tells us that, if this is the case, why bother changing the Act at all? Despite the fact that the minister will not inform the House of why he is making these changes, in yesterday's *Telegraph-Journal*, he inadvertently let a possible reason slip.

The minister claimed, in the paper, that discounting the lease payments for a company like Corridor will protect the government from potential lawsuits launched by the companies due to the government's ban on natural gas. Why, it is laughable to think that a company with over \$500 million of investment in the ground will be placated by the minister's offer to discount their fees by a few thousand dollars. The minister may have let us know why he intends to have these new powers.

Does this minister think that extending the licenses and leases indefinitely will ward off the lawsuits that will be launched by companies that are having their ability to operate taken away by this very government?

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: What I said the other day—and what I consistently say—is that, under the current legislation, the minister has the authority to extend a licence to search year over year—one year at a time, year over year. In terms of a lease for a company, the minister has the authority to give an extension of up to five years.

The amendments that we are bringing forward give the authority, through Cabinet and through regulations, if we want to extend it, not for an indefinite period of time, as the member opposite has said, but for a definite period of time. The minister has the authority to do that through the regulations and through the approval of Cabinet. It is not much different from what is happening now.

Mr. Stewart: It is very clear to see that the Energy Minister feels that he owes something to these companies that he is actually trying to protect from lawsuits. Let's continue to discuss the minister's comments from yesterday.

The minister stated that "there are current players now who are not going to search because they can't do it". That is one point on which I agree with the minister. His ban on gas development ensures that no research or exploration will take place because the critical process used to perform that work—hydraulic fracturing—will no longer be allowed.



Can the minister explain how he intends to meet one of his five conditions to gather clear and credible information on the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on air, health, and water, if the companies that would be searching, exploring, and gathering this very information, in his own words, cannot do it?

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: This government has no lessons to learn from the opposition. In fact, if anybody owes something, it is the former Tory government who owes an apology to the people of New Brunswick. What happened with Bill 18? When you talk about putting people on the hook, there is an \$875-million lawsuit against the province of New Brunswick because of the way that the former Tory government treated Enbridge Gas with Bill 18. With the way that the former Minister of Natural Resources dealt with Windsor Energy, we have another lawsuit of \$50 million against the province of New Brunswick. I have no lessons to learn from the opposition on trying to protect New Brunswickers.

Mr. Stewart: In recent days, we have seen this very minister poking his finger into a Crown corporation to play politics in his backyard. Let's talk about the fees that the minister says he is going to forego due to his ban on gas development.

The minister has identified \$700 000 of fee revenue that he is going to forego because of the government's policy on hydraulic fracturing. Of course, this is the first of many revenue streams that our province will be foregoing in the next number of years due to the ban on gas development. We will be foregoing jobs, investments, royalties, and taxes—all the very things that this government claims it is looking for.

Yet, the minister seems to view this revenue as a bargaining chip of sorts. He is trying to sell his poorly developed policies to the oil and gas industry. That \$700 000 is \$700 000. It is a lot of revenue that our province cannot afford to lose. Will the minister explain where he plans to make up this \$700 000 in lost revenue?

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: The only thing that is poorly developed is the opposition member's research.

I will repeat it again. In the current legislation, the minister has the authority to extend, year over year, a license to search. In the current legislation, the minister also has the authority to put regulations through Cabinet to extend those leases by up to five years, so there is not much different here.

If a company is on the ground and has a five-year lease and, after Year 2, there is a moratorium in place, it cannot continue its program for the next three years. Is it not fair that, if they cannot do the work, we can look... No decisions have been made. He is the only one who is saying that a decision has been made. We can have that responsible discussion if we need to extend that lease, if and when a moratorium is lifted.



To me, that is only responsible, unlike the former government that left us on the hook for lawsuits of several hundreds of millions of dollars against the people of New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister. Final question.

Prisoners

Mr. Northrup: That sounds as though the moratorium is going to be lifted soon. We really appreciate that over on this side, and I am sure the people of New Brunswick will. That is very good.

The people of Miramichi will not rest easy until Mr. Legere has been returned to supermaximum confinement in Quebec. Clearly, the Minister of Public Safety is not the man for the job, so I will turn to the Premier of this great province of New Brunswick.

I have a letter to the federal Minister of Public Safety, Minister Steven Blaney, formally requesting that Allan Legere be returned to the supermaximum security unit in Quebec.

Will the Premier agree to sign this letter, along with the Leader of the Official Opposition, so that the people of the Miramichi and the federal Minister of Public Safety will know that the government of New Brunswick will use every means at its disposal to correct the mistake that has been made in transferring this serial killer? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Horsman: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. It gives me the opportunity to thank the people of New Brunswick and the first responders. We have heard stories here today and yesterday from the members opposite from New Maryland-Sunbury and from Carleton-York on first responders responding and putting their lives in danger to help others in New Brunswick.

With regard to the question, I am very honoured that we have a great and open communication with Mr. Blaney. I have the utmost faith in the Correctional Service of Canada. As the member opposite should know, it is a federal issue. This transfer has taken place.

The members and the people of New Brunswick and especially the members and the people of the Miramichi should feel safe. They are safe, and they will always be safe. We have worked hard together at Public Safety, and we will continue to work hard for the people of New Brunswick.

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

