

March 20, 2015

[Original]

Shipyards

Mr. Fitch: I must say that Her Majesty's loyal opposition scored a hat trick for the people of New Brunswick this week. We questioned the government into action on the Youth Employment Fund, we questioned the government into action on the One-Job Pledge, and we questioned the government into action when we solidified the wood allocation for the forestry industry in New Brunswick.

In the spirit of cooperation and to try to make it four for four, the first question I would ask the Premier today is regarding shipbuilding in Bas-Caraquet. We touched on it briefly yesterday. Does the Premier have any news today—since I am sure he got a briefing on this yesterday—regarding the industry in Bas-Caraquet?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: First of all, when it comes to the Strategy for Crown Lands Forest Management, this is something I said about six months ago, during the pre-election debate between the leaders of the different political parties. Then, it took the opposition six months to ask the question here in the House. We have been very transparent. In fact, I was very transparent during the election campaign about our plans for forestry.

The forest industry is very important to us in New Brunswick. Indeed, ours is the Canadian province that depends the most on its forest industry, and that is why we are going to take the time to develop a plan that will help us to create jobs. Our plan will also include other principles. We want to have a forestry strategy that will help us sustain our forests over the long term. We also want to ensure that forests can help us have a good quality of life here in New Brunswick.

So, it is very clear that we want to take the time to develop a strategy that will help us with our priorities, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

[Original]

Mr. Fitch: Thank you for that answer, but that was yesterday's answer. We have a question today on a very, very important topic in the province—another one.

I remember that, when I was the Minister of Economic Development, we did a substantial amount of work toward making progress with this industry. We convinced Groupe Océan to come to New Brunswick and to set up shop here. We made one announcement initially, and the expectation was that, in the winter of 2015, there would be another announcement of jobs and investment in an industry and in a region of the province that desperately needs it.



We know that the Liberal government has stumbled out of the gate on economic development and has driven investment and jobs out of the province. We are hoping that the work that was already done on this file by Invest NB will continue. We are hoping that the Premier is not just waiting until Opportunities New Brunswick comes along to take the credit. Can the Premier update us on Groupe Océan and the Bas-Caraquet industry?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The member of the opposition asks questions, and he raises about four or five subjects. Obviously, I want to do the best I can to address them. I spoke about the forestry plan.

The member also talked about the Youth Employment Fund, saying that he pushed us into action. We made it pretty clear that April 1 would be the start of the program. We said that months ago. It was only the opposition that did not get the memo and brought this up yesterday and the day before. On top of that, the opposition members do not even support the program. They have said it in their speeches. They do not support the Youth Employment Fund. The member for Portland-Simonds says that it is no good and that we should just continue with what the previous government did.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Unfortunately, the previous government was not able to create jobs. It was the first government in 40 years not to have a net gain in job growth, which is very clearly the reason we have to get away from the status quo. That is exactly what our government is doing. We are going to be innovative about the way that we grow the economy. We are going to be focused on job creation, and we are going to work with New Brunswickers to accomplish this task.

Mr. Fitch: It is unfortunate that the Premier is trying to rewrite history today. He is trying to put words in the mouth of the member for Portland-Simonds. It was not the case at all. We want to monitor the Youth Employment Fund to make sure that it does the job it is supposed to do. We want to monitor the One-Job Pledge because it was creating full-time jobs in New Brunswick as opposed to six-month positions.

Again, I was very clear in the last question. I want the Premier to give us an update on the shipbuilding industry in New Brunswick. An initial announcement was made with Groupe Océan about building barges in the Bas-Caraquet region, and, in the winter of 2015, we expected to have another announcement of private sector investment.

We know that the Premier is pushing investment out of the province with some of the decisions and some of the conditions that his government has put in New Brunswick. We know that. Industry has told us that, and third party people have told us that. We want to assure the people again. Can the Premier clarify the timeline for...

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.



Hon. Mr. Gallant: First off, on the Youth Employment Fund, the member for Oromocto-Lincoln accused the government of creating a Youth Employment Fund that would technically be workweeks. That is what the opposition members are trying to make of the Youth Employment Fund. They clearly do not support the program, yet they are trying to take credit today for its implementation. It is really unfortunate, and I think we can have a more constructive debate on the floor of the Legislature.

With regard to the question of shipbuilding in New Brunswick, it is a priority of ours.

[Translation]

Supporting the project at the NB Naval Center, in Bas-Caraquet, is a priority. This project was very well received by our government, and the communities have shown that it was a priority for them by investing in it themselves. I said yesterday, and I will say it again—and I also told the media—that an announcement about this will be made soon. We are very much looking forward to working with northern residents in an effort to create jobs and economic growth. We are going to keep up the momentum that we have built.

[Original]

Mr. Fitch: The concern that we had earlier in the week and in this session is with regard to the announcements regarding economic development in the province. We are concerned that they are being driven out of the province, and we are concerned that they are not going to happen.

I appreciate the information that the Premier is giving us today, but it really feeds into the other concern that we had, which is that he has told Economic Development to stop. Do not make any announcements in the province. Do not give any credit to Invest NB or to the former government. Let's wait until after April Fool's Day and after Opportunities New Brunswick is up and running, and then we will make announcements on things like Groupe Océan in Bas-Caraquet.

Would the Premier commit today that, when the government makes this announcement—if it is going to make this announcement and if the company is going to continue this investment and has not left the province because of negative press and decisions of this government—he will give credit where credit is due, which is to the people, the hardworking employees, of Invest NB and Economic Development in New Brunswick?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We are not as concerned about announcements as was the previous government. We want results when it comes to job creation. We do not want to have just announcements when in fact the economy is losing jobs, as we saw under the previous government. We are focused on making sure that we have the right conditions for economic growth in New Brunswick. We are focused on jobs being our number one priority.

When it comes to this specific project, in fact, the member opposite would know—he would have seen the agenda, and he would have been briefed on this fact—that an announcement was to



have been made not too long ago. Unfortunately, there was a weather issue. There was a storm, so not all parties could get to Bas-Caraquet to make the announcement.

While the member opposite is concerned about our communications plan, we are going to be concerned and focused on creating jobs for New Brunswickers.

[Translation]

Northern New Brunswick

Ms. Dubé: We saw that the Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick was not very pleased with the minister's tour regarding the Northern Economic Development Fund. Now we see that the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick has also expressed its disappointment at not being adequately consulted on economic development and the government's vision for the future use of these funds.

My question for the minister responsible is this: Is he going to invite representatives of these organizations to the table, as he should, and actually consult them about the way the Northern Economic Development Fund will be invested?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Fraser: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Certainly, our priority is creating jobs and growing our economy, particularly in the north. We know that, over the past four years, under her mandate and under the mandate of the former government, we had the worst job creation record in 40 years. In the north, we did not succeed under that government and the status quo is not acceptable. That is why we had a discussion tour. That is why we met with municipal leaders, that is why we met with CBDCs, that is why we met with members of the business community, and that is why we met with people and entrepreneurs in the north on a tour over the March break.

Our door is open to meeting with the Economic Council of New Brunswick. Our door is open to meeting with the Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick. In fact, I had a discussion with its president earlier this week, and we set up a meeting. We are going to continue to work with all our stakeholders and meet with all the groups that have an interest in partnering and working with us in a positive way to grow our economy and to grow our economy in the north.

[Translation]

Ms. Dubé: What have we seen to date? The minister rises in the House and keeps talking about the famous week-long House recess, during March break, when people are taking care of their families.



We also know that the minister has held talks, by invitation only, with a few representatives from the northern communities, and, again, gave them only 24 hours' notice. However, people in the northern part of the province are serious: They want economic development, they want to be adequately consulted, and they want to participate in the government's vision on economic development.

The budget is apparently almost ready to be tabled, and the Minister of Finance has already announced that \$90 million has been found through cuts. Given that people in the northern part of the province are worried, my question is this: Is the minister going to sit down with northern residents, and not by invitation only, to ensure that consultation really takes place, to see...

[Original]

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Fraser: I want to assure the member opposite that we will, in fact, work with our partners. We will work in a positive way with all the stakeholders across the north, unlike the members opposite when they were in government over the past four years. I cannot recall a single time when the former Minister responsible for the Northern and Miramichi Funds, who was from Shippagan, ever visited the community of Miramichi. When I visited the community of Madawaska, I heard the same thing. They said: Thank you for coming. We are glad to be part of the discussion. We want to be a partner. We want to be positive. We want to have a positive image of the north.

That is exactly what we are going to do, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do. I will take no lessons from the member opposite. Very clearly, in the past, they were a failure, and that is unfortunate for the people in the north and the people in the Miramichi region. They have had the highest unemployment rate in the country over the past four years in the northern part of the province. The status quo is not acceptable, and I will not follow your example. I will lead, under the leadership of our Premier and our team, to get it done right.

[Translation]

Ms. Dubé: If the minister does not want to take any lessons from the opposition, he should at least listen carefully to what the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick is telling him. Indeed, the council is extremely disappointed with this minister, who was not necessarily listening and being serious about this invitation. I think that 24 hours' notice is not enough time. Also, if you ask all the mayors of the municipalities whether 24 hours' notice is enough to come and sit at the table and then have a decent conversation where people can share their points of view, they will tell you it is not.

People from the northern part of the province are known to be the kind of people who prepare for meetings, who are not afraid to speak out, and who want to participate. The minister is not necessarily being asked to do a public relations tour so that he can get his picture in the



newspapers and say: I came, I came. It is about having proper consultation to ensure that northern economic development moves forward. Can the minister confirm that he is going to do that?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Fraser: The member opposite wants to talk about a PR tour. I recall when, four years ago, under their leadership, the Premier came to the Miramichi and to places in the north to talk about a \$250-million fund for the northern part of the province and for the Miramichi region. The fact of the matter is that, over the last four years, they budgeted \$100 million and they overspent that budget.

There was a \$250-million commitment. They talked about PR. They made those announcements all over the north, but they put only \$100 million into the budget. No wonder it was a failure—no wonder—because they were not honest with the people of Miramichi. They were not honest with the people of the north. They were not honest. They continue to play politics here today, and that is shameful.

I am going to continue to work with the people in the north, with the people of the Miramichi, and with people across the province, under the leadership of our Premier and with our team, to have a positive approach and to be open, transparent, and honest with people. Thank you.

New Brunswick Museum

Mr. Wetmore: Our New Brunswick Museum is Canada's oldest continuing museum. The collections building and the properties of the museum are the property of the people of New Brunswick. Our Progressive Conservative government worked very hard on a proposed \$40-million expansion of the museum's Collections Centre. This project is under a very tight timeline because of the well-publicized issues with the roof of the Douglas Avenue location. I am very concerned to hear rumblings that the funding for this project may fall victim to the March 31 budget. Will the Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture please advise the House as to whether the funding for the Collections Centre will proceed as planned?

Hon. Mr. Fraser: Our government recognizes that money spent on culture is an investment. The New Brunswick Museum is an invaluable resource for knowledge about our province's history and past, and we must treasure it. I have visited the museum and the Collections Centre and have had a tour of the facility. We are certainly going to work with it very closely to try to find solutions to some of the problems that it is facing. Thank you.

Mr. Wetmore: Moments ago, I heard about what is going on in the north. There seem to be rumblings about how effective the minister is. I certainly already know enough about the minister's consultation with the Tourism Industry Association of New Brunswick. I am skeptical about the minister's ability to handle the tourism file.



Now, we have this urgent matter regarding our provincial heritage and culture. Who is in the middle of the uncertainty? Again, it is the very same minister. Will he get up in the House and give the names of the stakeholders, if any, that he has had discussions with regarding the New Brunswick Museum? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Fraser: The member opposite seems to be infatuated with my schedule and the people with whom I am meeting.

He brought up TIANB, so I am going to respond to that. A number of meetings were held. On November 6, the minister met with the President of TIANB. On November 26, the minister spoke to the President of TIANB. On December 9, December 12, and December 19, senior members of our team met with TIANB. On January 15, the minister called the President of TIANB. On January 20, correspondence was sent to the President and the Executive Director of TIANB. On February 3, the meeting that was scheduled with TIANB at the president's chalet was cancelled by TIANB because of inclement weather. On February 5, we rescheduled the meeting to meet in Fredericton, and it was cancelled by TIANB because of inclement weather. On February 17, a meeting was scheduled to meet with the President and the Executive Director of TIANB at the Legislature. It was cancelled by TIANB because of weather. On February 20, the deputy minister and staff met with the Executive Director of TIANB.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Minister, please address the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Fraser: I will continue with the next question.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Mr. Wetmore: I would like to thank the minister for finally providing the answers to the questions that I asked last week. That was not really a hard question. Unfortunately, he is blaming a lot of the cancelled meetings on TIANB.

I do not dare ask about the signage issue because, my heavens, we know that poor Transportation and Infrastructure and Tourism are going to be blamed for that.

Let's take a moment to examine the hard facts. The New Brunswick Museum must move its Collections Centre. The roof of the Douglas Avenue location must be replaced. This is not a wait-and-see project. It is critical that the Collections Centre project move ahead swiftly. Our government understood the urgency and was committed to this project. This minister and this government have thrown the project into uncertainty. Will the minister remove the uncertainty and commit today to moving ahead with the Collections Centre project of the New Brunswick Museum?

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.



Hon. Mr. Fraser: I know that we have limited time in question period, but I am going to continue with my list of meetings with TIANB for the record so that the member opposite is very clear on the schedule.

On February 27, the deputy minister called and spoke with the President of TIANB. On March 3, the minister's office offered to meet with the President of TIANB on March 17. It was declined because TIANB said that it did not have any pressing concerns at the time. It said that, unless the minister had questions or concerns, it preferred to wait until a little bit later. On March 5, we had another phone call with the President of TIANB to confirm that was the case. On March 16, the deputy minister called and spoke with the President of TIANB. On March 16 and March 17, we sent correspondence to the President of TIANB.

Mr. Speaker: Minister, please address the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Fraser: Today, March 20, I have sent a request to have a conference call with the President and the Executive Director of TIANB. Very clearly, I think that my schedule speaks for itself.

We want to work with our partners in a positive way. It is unfortunate that the member opposite just wants to throw dirt and cast a cloud over everything that we are doing to try to move our province forward.

Hospitals

Mr. Jody Carr: This question is for the Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety, and Minister of Justice. Last year, issues of security and public safety came to light at the Saint John Regional Hospital when a psychiatric patient was involved in a serious incident. This brings to light the issues around the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital. There have been complaints from patients and staff at the Chalmers hospital regarding space, security, and safety. The police drop patients off at the emergency room at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital, where there is waiting in the emergency room. There is a lack of privacy and a lack of safety. Patients are now being put into the fracture room and into the X-ray room for holding. Is the Minister of Justice, Minister of Public Safety, and Deputy Premier concerned about this safety and security issue?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: The opposition continues to raise the issue of the Chalmers hospital. While we acknowledge that it is an important part of our infrastructure in terms of health care, we are facing economic challenges, and we cannot say yes to every single project, every single initiative, that comes forward—contrary to the former government, which would commit to everything, but then not put real money into the budget in many cases.

In this particular case, as I have said many times, choices had to be made. When it came time to put the capital budget together, we had more asks than we had money, and we had to make some choices. We have put the Chalmers on the side. It does not mean that the project is never going to happen. It does not mean that there is not a need to make some improvements at the



Chalmers hospital. It simply means that, for this coming fiscal year, that project is not going forward. A decision was made by the government to move forward with the community health centre.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Mr. Jody Carr: The previous government said yes to the Chalmers renovation project and said yes to the community health clinic. In fact, in November 2013, the money was put into the budget for both these projects. In October 2014, the Minister of Health received the plan to move forward with this project at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital. While the current government is putting this project on the sidelines, the people are lining up in not only the emergency rooms. They are lining up in the fracture clinic, and they are lining up now in the X-ray department. This is causing serious privacy issues and serious security issues.

The Minister of Public Safety and Minister of Justice is the regional minister from Fredericton. Why is he not fighting for the Chalmers hospital at the Cabinet table? Is it because he has publicly stated that the Justice Building in Fredericton is his number one priority, not the Chalmers renovation? Is that the reason? That is the only thing we can come up with. It is not because of the budget. It is not because the project is not ready. Is it because the regional minister, the Deputy Premier, has not set the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital as a priority?

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: The opposition is right that we have to relieve pressure on the emergency room at the Chalmers. That is why we chose to invest in a community health centre right here in downtown Fredericton. There were two projects, and there was only enough money for one to move forward. We had to make a difficult decision. That is what governing is about. That is what this side of the Legislature is about. We realize that we cannot move forward on every single project that was committed to by the former government in the same fashion that it wanted to because it was committing to things without having money in the budget.

We had the former Minister of Health standing up in this House and saying: Now that we have our fiscal house in order, we can move forward with this project. We do not have our fiscal house in order. We are working on this side to get it in order. To do that, tough decisions are required, and this was a tough decision. However, it does not mean that we are not looking out for the best interests of the people who live here in Fredericton and in the surrounding areas.

Mr. Jody Carr: The Deputy Premier—the regional minister—and the Liberal government are not looking out for the best interests of the patients of the Chalmers hospital. Not only are they lined up in the emergency room, but they are lined up in the fracture clinic and, now, in the X-ray department. This is causing serious privacy issues, serious security issues, and serious safety and health issues.



The Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety, and Minister of Justice has a responsibility for public safety and security, yet we see that the Chalmers hospital... Not moving forward with this project and having had the money in the budget in November 2013—\$3.9 million—to move forward and having had the plan since October... The reasons this government is giving are not adding up. The fact is that, while this government is putting this project on the sidelines, people are lining up to get the health services that they need.

Both projects were put on the table, and one project has been sidelined by the Liberal government. What is the real reason? Will the Deputy Premier stand up and support the Fredericton regional hospital to ensure that the patients get what they deserve?

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: Again, I am going to have to remind the members opposite that last year was an election year. They went around and made all kinds of promises to all kinds of people. They promised the community health centre and the hospital, but, oddly enough, although they had put down \$4 million for the hospital project in the capital budget last year, only \$90 000 was invested by the former government. That shows how much of a priority this was for the former government.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: We are committed to the community health centre. It is going to help alleviate stress at the Chalmers hospital. It is a choice that had to be made. It was a difficult choice. We are not saying that the Chalmers hospital renovation is never going to happen, but choices had to be made.

[*Translation*]

There were other projects elsewhere in the province that were ready to move forward, including the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont Hospital and Chaleur Regional Hospital projects, so we had to make investments in those locations. We only had so much money in our budget...

[*Original*]

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Student Employment

Mr. Holder: Each and every year, the SEED Program is a very effective tool to allow nonprofit organizations and municipalities across this province to hire summer students. It is also an amazing opportunity for young people to gain experience and to have summer employment.



My question for the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is regarding whether or not there are any changes to that program for this summer.

[Translation]

Hon. Mrs. Landry: I thank the opposition member for his question. Actually, opposition and government members will soon get news about the SEED program, and, theoretically, there should be no change.

[Original]

Mr. Holder: It is great news to know that no changes are coming to the program this year. My question is this. Historically, there has been an allotment for each electoral district and Members of the Legislative Assembly get to make recommendations to the minister as to which SEED grants get allotted to various organizations. In light of the fact that we have fewer electoral districts than before, I am wondering whether there will be fewer students or will those students be equally dispersed throughout the province to those various electoral boundaries.

[Translation]

Hon. Mrs. Landry: You know, we are working very hard to create jobs and meet our employers' needs. We are also working with workers to meet the needs of the New Brunswick workforce. We want to help New Brunswick families and students. By providing money through the SEED program, we enable our students to gain experience in addition to having the money to pay for their postsecondary education. Our priorities are specifically to have programs and assistance for New Brunswick students and employers.

[Original]

Mr. Holder: It is a simple question. The minister has already acknowledged that there are no changes to the program. All we want to know is this: Now that there are fewer electoral ridings around this province, will the SEED students be equally dispersed throughout the remaining ridings or will there be fewer students? It is a simple question. We need an answer today. It is a simple question. There are no changes, so where are these students going to be allocated? Is this something else that we are going to have to keep asking about and, eventually, 10 days down the road, as with the One-Job Pledge and the other program, we are going to get answers?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I think the minister answered the question very well. She said that this is a program that is important. We are focused on job creation. We want to give opportunities to young people so that they gain work experience. The SEED Program can help with that. There is no doubt about it.



However, the Youth Employment Fund can do that as well. I am very proud of the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour for the wonderful program that she has presented to New Brunswickers for New Brunswickers.

The member opposite is one of the people who actually oppose the Youth Employment Fund, something that is going to help us give experience to young people so that they can go into the workplace.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: On top of that, I have to make a clarification. The minister said that she does not see that there will be any changes. However, a budget is coming, as the member opposite knows. The Minister of Finance is working with all the ministers and with our government to make sure that we make the right decisions that will help us get our finances in order, but also ensure that we strategically create jobs throughout the province. Thank you.

