

December 4, 2015

[Original]

Carbon Tax

Mr. Fitch: We know that the Premier is jet-setting off to Paris this weekend. He has been in the media many, many times talking about being in favour of a new carbon tax. You will recall that the Minister of Social Development called tax increases “the lazy way out”. Now, New Brunswick already has the distinction of having the greatest reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in all of Canada. We are down by 31% from the 2001 peak levels. This has been accomplished through good policy decisions and legislation. It has also been without the need of more taxes being taken out of the pockets of New Brunswickers. Is the Premier admitting with this dialogue that he is not willing to continue the trend of good policy decisions? Is he taking, as the Minister of Social Development says, the lazy way out?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: First, it is important to clarify that, when I spoke to the media, I made it very clear that we are willing to look at all options to enhance and further our role in fighting climate change. The opposition members specifically asked: Would that potentially include a price on carbon? I said: It is possible. It is on the table. We will look at all the ways that we can play our role. Then, of course, they asked: Does that mean a carbon tax? I said: That is one of the mechanisms that will be considered.

I am going to say it again here in the Legislature. I know that the member opposite was not present when I did the scrum or when I have talked about this in the past. We are looking at all options and all mechanisms and at different jurisdictions to fully understand what we can do as a province to play our role when it comes to fighting climate change. We need to grow our economy and create jobs, but we need to do that in a sustainable way. That is why we are going to enhance our role when it comes to fighting climate change in a responsible manner.

Mr. Fitch: The greenhouse gas emissions in New Brunswick have decreased by 16% from 2010 to 2013. That is the result of policies that the Progressive Conservative government implemented, such as reducing the use of fossil fuel plants and increasing the use of emission-free power generation. Our country-leading greenhouse gas reduction success from 2001 onward has been without a price on carbon.

In Paris, we feel that the Premier should talk about the way that governments can lead the charge on greenhouse gas emissions. He should point to the success in New Brunswick that we have had over the past number of years. This is as opposed to New Brunswickers having to ante up and pay more tax. Why has the Premier chosen not to boast about New Brunswick’s record on greenhouse gas emissions but, instead, to focus the discussion solely on greenhouse gas and the pricing of carbon tax? Why has he chosen to reach into the pockets of the taxpayers?



[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: First of all, of course, I praised the initiatives that have already been implemented in our province; there is no doubt that I did that. At the same time, I said that, if we must develop our economy, create jobs, and develop our natural resources and our energy projects, we have to do our part in the fight against climate change.

[Original]

I will say it again. We said that we are looking at different ways of doing that. Obviously, the media asked: Does that include a potential price on carbon? I said: Yes, it includes a potential price on carbon. We are looking at it, and we have said nothing further on the matter other than to confirm that all these options are on the table.

When the member opposite talks about the greenhouse gas emissions being reduced over the past few years, it is important to note that they were reduced under his government because the economy stalled. In fact, we actually lost jobs during that government's mandate. It was the first government in 40 years that lost jobs during its mandate.

We are going to fight climate change the right way, by growing the economy at the same time.

Mr. Fitch: It is interesting that, today, the Premier said that the government did not discuss anything further than just mentioning it. He was in the media saying that it was revenue neutral. The question has to be asked: Who is it revenue neutral for? We have seen that, in Alberta, the concept of revenue neutral means, one thing, bringing money into the coffers of the government, and, then, spending it, to someone else. If people are gassing up their cars, paying their electric bills, or paying their oil bills, they have to reach deeper and deeper into their pockets. Again, it will stall the economy in New Brunswick if there is a punitive tax on carbon that the individuals of New Brunswick have to pay to put money into the coffers of the New Brunswick government.

Is the Premier admitting today, when he talks about revenue neutral, that it is really not revenue neutral for all New Brunswickers, that it is just revenue neutral for the government, and that it will bring it in and then spend it on things such as Atcon or the shipyard in Caraquet?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I certainly want to invite the member opposite to come and listen to my scrum so that we do not have to do this a day or two after I speak to the media. When the media asked me why a potential carbon tax or a price on carbon was not included in the *Choices* report—which was a very fair question by the media—we said that we were looking at all vehicles, all options and mechanisms, to fight climate change. A price on carbon is something that we are considering as well.

The media asked: Why would you not put it in the *Choices* report? It is a fair question by the media, and I will give the same answer to Leader of the Opposition that I gave to the media. It is



because, if we ever looked at it, we would only do it if it was revenue neutral. That means that the government would not receive funds. It would not receive extra money that we would then put to anything else other than the finances of the province. It is not a mechanism being considered to get our finances in order. It is a mechanism being considered to grow the economy and fight climate change at the same time.

Mr. Fitch: It is intriguing that the Premier is so focused on this carbon tax. His mentor, Kathleen Wynne, the Premier of Ontario, is talking about a cap and trade. She is the Premier that he could not stand up to, to promote the Energy East Pipeline file.

When the Premier talked about revenue neutral, he said that the government is going to bring the money in and spend it just as fast as it brings it in. That is the Liberal way. Take the money out of the pockets of New Brunswickers and spend it on things such as Atcon, bankrupted shipyards, or advertising in New Brunswick.

Again, the Premier should be promoting other ways legislation and policy will affect greenhouse gas emissions because the results are clear. We have Canada's best reduction in greenhouse gas. It is 31% since the peak in 2001. As the Premier is strolling down the Champs-Élysées, are there any other ideas that he can come up with that are not going to reach into the pockets of the taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Where do I begin? First, the opposition talks about the best reduction. The only thing that we know of the previous government is that it had the worst job creation record in 40 years. The reductions that we saw in New Brunswick over its mandate were because forestry, manufacturing, and the economy as a whole were struggling under its leadership.

We are going to focus on creating jobs and economic growth while protecting the environment, not only because it is the right thing to do to help our children, our grandchildren, and future generations, but also because we need to do this to grow the economy and create jobs. We will not be able to develop our natural resources and energy projects domestically in this country, and we will not be able to export the products from our natural resources and energy projects if we do not fight climate change. People will not let us develop these natural resources unless we do that, and people in the international community will not buy from us unless we do that. That is why we are doing it.

Mr. Fitch: Again, this is where we differ—on the point that jobs and the economy could be threatened by another tax on top of the taxes that this government has already put on businesses in the province. We have had the biggest reduction by sector since 1990, so it is not just the last four years. There has been electricity and heat generation in New Brunswick because of good policy decisions: restarting Point Lepreau, closing coal-fired or oil-fired generating plants, and establishing a target of 40% renewable electricity by 2020. Those are examples of good environmental policy, and what is clear is that it works. We have had the largest decrease in emissions in the country. The Premier should be promoting New Brunswick.



Be NB-proud, Mr. Premier. Do not just jump on the bandwagon because your federal counterparts think it is a good idea.

As the Premier is dancing along the Seine in Paris this weekend, could he please, please release any reports...

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The only things that threatened the economy were the failed policies of the Leader of the Opposition's government. It was the only government in 40 years not to have a net gain in job creation. They will stand up today and say that they are proud of what they did to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when we know that the economists are saying that it was because they could not grow the economy and create jobs. It was because manufacturing, forestry, and the economy as a whole were suffering.

This is not the first time the Leader of the Opposition has rewritten history. Yesterday, he talked about his mandate when he was a minister under the former government. He was trying to say that the economy was rolling, that the finances were going in the right direction, and that the former government did all of this without any tax increases or reductions in expenditures.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: They had the highest, largest tax increase in a generation. They did not hit any of their targets for reducing the deficit, and one thing is certain: They could not grow the economy. We will not learn from them. We will focus on creating jobs in this province.

Mr. Fitch: Yes, and we know how you focused on jobs when we see the results on the Atcon Construction file. That is how the Liberals focus on government job creation.

Here are some good examples from the opposition of how you can continue to have good policies and good legislation while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Good policy would be improving emission standards for passenger vehicles and shifting to natural gas freight systems for the transportation sector. These policies would guarantee emission reduction, whereas a cap or a tax on carbon emissions would not guarantee a reduction in greenhouse gases, especially not if the price point is too low or is not punitive enough.

Again, the Liberals have never met a tax they did not like. Carbon tax is another way of reaching into the pockets of the people of New Brunswick. The Premier says that this is revenue neutral. Before you leave, Mr. Premier, can you give us the reports and can you give us the studies that show that so we can look at them while you are waiting in line to see the *Mona Lisa*?



[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Once again, judging by the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, he is making up a hypothetical universe. Indeed, there is no carbon tax at the moment. We have clearly said to the media that we would look at all the options, including a carbon tax. We are seeing it across the country and even around the world, so this measure will also be considered in New Brunswick.

I attended a climate change summit in Quebec City, and I met the Governors of New England states and the Eastern Canadian Premiers. Furthermore, along with the Environment Critic and, of course, the Green Party Leader and member for Fredericton South, I am going to learn more about the environment during my trip to Paris. We are going to see what is happening in other countries, and we are going to make sure the policies that we bring forward here in New Brunswick help us create jobs and fight climate change.

Nursing Home Beds

Ms. Dubé: One thing was certainly real: We had a plan for the replacement and renovation of nursing homes in New Brunswick for the 2011-2016 period, and Foyer St-Antoine was included in it. Since the minister might have had the chance to get more information, I wonder if she could confirm definitively that she knows the Foyer St-Antoine was in fact included in the plan for the Greater Moncton area and 30 more beds were to be added there.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I am very pleased to see the opposition member rise today to speak again about infrastructure. She tells us that she wants to invest in infrastructure such as nursing homes.

So, today, I will ask the member my question again. Two days ago, she said in the media that she was against the investments we are making, as a government, in infrastructure. The day before yesterday, she said she was for the investments in the amphitheatre in Edmundston. Now she is saying that she is for an investment in a nursing home. My question is important, and I hope the member will answer it: She is against investments in which specific projects? Could she list them? It is not enough to give an example; she must name all the projects that she does not support.

The member seems to believe, as do her colleagues, that we will be able to eliminate the deficit if we stop investing in infrastructure. We realize that we are not going to create jobs, stimulate the economy, and have economic growth if we do not invest in our infrastructure.

[Original]

Mr. Speaker: Time, Premier.



[*Translation*]

Ms. Dubé: That is pitiful; the Premier is playing politics at the expense of seniors. I asked the minister a simple question. People in Saint-Antoine knew that there were to be 30 more beds in their nursing home; it was in the plan announced by our government. The funds were allocated, and the work began on the site and the planning.

The minister has publicly said that the Foyer St-Antoine was not part of the comprehensive 2011–16 plan. Surely by now she must have done her homework, so I will give her another chance to rise in the House to confirm that she made a mistake and that, indeed, Foyer St-Antoine was to get, and should still get, 30 more beds to serve rural residents and seniors.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We cannot help but react; the member opposite is saying that she is against our investments in infrastructure. She said that.

(Interjection.)

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I apologize, but I am going to finish my answer, if possible, Mr. Speaker. The member is saying that she is against our investments in our infrastructure.

[*Original*]

This is an important conversation to have because we believe that we have to invest strategically in our infrastructure to create jobs and stimulate the economy. We believe that we have to make tough choices to get our finances in order, and it is certainly not easy. We will not say that it is easy. It is not easy for us to make the decisions, it is not easy for New Brunswickers to talk about the choices, and it is certainly not easy for New Brunswickers to accept those choices once they are going to be made. This is not an easy conversation.

However, the member opposite gets up to criticize us for investing in infrastructure but then gets up, time and time again, to say that she is okay with certain projects. She needs to clarify her position and the position of the opposition. The people of New Brunswick deserve to know: Are they for strategic investments in infrastructure or not?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Dubé: Seniors from Saint-Antoine deserve the 30 additional beds in their nursing home.

Once again, I repeat that my question is very, very clear, and it is for the minister. I have the plan in my hands; it was even posted on the Department of Social Development website. In this plan, it is very clearly indicated that work was to start in 2013. The minister even told journalists that the announcement had only been made a few months before the election.



The minister has surely done her homework by now. I ask my question to the Premier or the minister: Can you confirm that this work was in fact included in our plan? Can you rethink your position and add 30 more beds in the Saint-Antoine area? There is a need; this was included in the plan, and investments have already been made. I am asking you again to add the 30 more beds for seniors in Saint-Antoine, which will meet the needs in rural areas. I am giving you another chance...

[Original]

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Ms. Rogers: Our priority is the care for seniors, and we are also very focused on evidence-based decision making. We had a plan, the 2011–16 plan, and this plan was altered in the weeks leading up to the election.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Ms. Rogers: We made changes to go back to the original plan, following demographic and facility evidence. We are committed to doing this going forward.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition will come to order.

Hon. Ms. Rogers: We have looked at waiting lists, and we have looked at what is needed in Saint-Antoine versus what is needed in the Greater Moncton area. We followed the evidence for demographic demands. Thank you.

Atcon

Mr. K. MacDonald: To the Premier, I am reading from Business New Brunswick's Summary of Requests for Atcon from August 2009. There are a few interesting points in the document. It says:

- *Company is unpredictable*
- *No resolution in sight*

This is interesting:

- *Company has a cash burn rate of close to \$1 million per week*



- *This additional cash will not solve the problem*
 - *May only delay a complete collapse*

the requested assistance cannot be recommended.

Given the department's unfavourable recommendation, why did the Liberal government decide to move forward? Who actually made the decision to give up 100% of the security when the bank was asking for only 20%?

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: It is quite unfortunate that, time and time again, we see political rhetoric from the opposition on an issue that was dealt with many years ago, way back in the 2008 era.

As a new government, we cooperated with the Auditor General. When she wanted to do some work, we made sure that we cooperated. The CEO of Opportunities New Brunswick agreed to act on all the recommendations that were brought forward. We did that. However, do you know what?

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The member for Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: New Brunswickers are looking for leadership, leadership not only from the government of the day but also from the 49 MLAs who were elected in September 2014, leadership to tackle the big issues of today. When we took office, we were left with a \$600-million deficit because the former government could not reach its targets. New Brunswickers want us to make those tough choices once and for all.

Do you wonder why you are sitting on that side? It is because New Brunswickers want us to tackle the big issues. This is what we are doing, and you are stuck in the weeds once again.

Mr. K. MacDonald: What the people are looking for is the missing \$50 million. To Atcon Four or Atcon Five... On August 10, 2009, the New Brunswick Industrial Development Board met. In attendance was a who's who of New Brunswick's senior civil service—Byron James, Phil LePage, Tom Reid, Bill Levesque, Jim McKay, Michel Albert, and John Rosengren. The board concurred with the departmental recommendation to reject. Your department said no. Your deputy said no. Why did the Liberal government decide to move forward? Who made the decision to give up 100% security when the bank asked for only 20%?

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: The members opposite were in government for four years. They could have dealt with this issue. Even last week, it came out that they bought computers from Atcon in 2013. If they found something on those computers, they would have brought them to the



RCMP at that time. However, they did not. They use them now for a political stunt. They would have brought them in at election time.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: They did not, because, unfortunately, there is nothing on those computers.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: The member for Southwest Miramichi-Bay du Vin will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: They are too afraid to tackle the big issues of today, so they always go back to issues such as Atcon. It is quite unfortunate.

Again, New Brunswickers are looking for leadership. We have the *Choices* report. When we heard the reply to the speech from the throne from the Leader of the Opposition, he could not talk about any of the tough choices that New Brunswickers are facing and where we should move forward. Again, it is all political rhetoric. The members opposite are too afraid to tackle the big issues on which New Brunswickers want their government to make choices.

Mr. K. MacDonald: The minister opposite keeps giving silly answers to serious questions.

In the assessment of risk prepared by the department, it was stated: “Every step taken by the province further erodes our security position, from bad to worse.” The departmental recommendation states: “This needs to be offset by garnering further security... (Spouses, children, etc...).”

The Liberal government members thought they knew better than everyone else, as they always do, so, again, I ask: Who made the decision to go forward? Why did we give up 100% when the bank was asking for only 20%?

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: The member opposite talks about silly answers. It is not about silly answers. We are tackling the issues of today. That is what New Brunswickers want us to do.

I could do what the members opposite are doing. I could talk about the past. Do you want to talk about the past? Well, New Brunswickers are pretty upset that you converted Coleson Cove without a contract—\$750 million. New Brunswickers are upset that the Point Lepreau refurbishment did not have the proper safeguards in place and we have an extra \$1-billion cost overrun. Because of the actions of the former government, when it brought in Bill 18 with respect to Enbridge Gas, New Brunswick taxpayers are now faced with two lawsuits totalling \$830 million. On top of that, just to help out the former MP in Saint John, Rodney Weston, the



previous government decided it was going to buy a rusty old bridge in Saint John for \$150 million. While you are looking for the \$70 million, we are looking for almost \$3 billion which that former government lost.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Human Resources

Mr. Coon: This week, it has become public knowledge that the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health, New Brunswick's chief physician, everybody's doctor, Dr. Cleary, has been placed on leave without explanation. Dr. Cleary is a constituent of mine, and she has no idea what she is supposed to have done wrong or why she was forced to take this leave. Will the Minister of Health clear the air today and explain to the people of New Brunswick why Dr. Cleary has been asked to take this leave of absence?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: I know that the member has not been in this House for a very long time, but he should know that we cannot talk about personnel issues on the floor of the Legislature. We have said very clearly that this is a personnel matter. It is an HR matter, and it is not something that we are able to talk about. Yesterday, the civil service—in quite an unprecedented move, actually—came out and stated that very clearly. The Deputy Minister of Health explained the situation. It has nothing to do with the office per se, and it is a personnel matter that we cannot discuss on the floor of the Legislature.

[Translation]

Mr. Coon: Dr. Cleary is a woman of tremendous integrity, and New Brunswickers are proud that she is responsible for their public health. We know that some of the studies done by Dr. Cleary and her team have not been favourable to the former government.

[Original]

My question for the Minister of Health is this: Does this have anything to do with the fact that the fracking commission is soon to release its report and it does not want to have Dr. Cleary present when that report is released, given her past report and recommendations on shale gas?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: To ensure that everyone has fully understood the message, I will simply read the statement released yesterday by the civil service:

Despite the confidentiality of a human resources process which involves Dr. Cleary and others and which has been initiated and is being overseen by professional civil servants as part of their responsibilities under the Civil Service Act, Dr. Cleary has chosen to advise the media that she has been placed on leave.



We have an obligation to protect the privacy and personal information of all parties involved. The human resources process that has been initiated is not politically motivated nor have questions been raised about the medical and scientific work being undertaken by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, which work continues under the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health.

This refers to Dr. Jennifer Russell. Thank you.

[Original]

Mr. Coon: Dr. Cleary has the faith of the people of this province and is well respected by her colleagues in the medical community. She was recently awarded a prestigious award in Fredericton, and some of her colleagues were present to talk about the reasons she was so deserving in terms of receiving this award. She is everyone's doctor. The people of this province deserve to know when she will be allowed to return to her job to continue to advocate on behalf of their health.

My final question for the minister is this: How much longer does he expect Dr. Cleary to be out of her office?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: Again, for clarity, I will read the statement that was put out by the civil service yesterday:

Despite the confidentiality of a human resources process which involves Dr. Cleary and others and which has been initiated and is being overseen by professional civil servants as part of their responsibilities under the Civil Service Act, Dr. Cleary has chosen to advise the media that she has been placed on leave.

We have an obligation to protect the privacy and personal information of all parties involved. The human resources process that has been initiated is not politically motivated nor have questions been raised about the medical and scientific work being undertaken by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, which work continues under the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health.

—Dr. Jennifer Russell.

Again, this is a personnel issue, and it is not appropriate to be talking about it on the floor of the Legislature. The civil service is dealing with this situation, and it will be dealt with accordingly.

VON

Mr. B. Macdonald: I have some questions today about veterans' health care, and I would like to ask them of the Minister responsible for Military Affairs.



As we know, VON was a key service provider for veterans in New Brunswick. Last week, we learned of its unfortunate collapse, which has left a major void in primary health care here in the province. With assessments, extramural nursing, and essential foot care, some 3 000 visits to veterans risk going unserved this year. To those veterans counting on them, these are essential services, and they need them returned immediately. It has been over a week now, and the clock is ticking. I am wondering whether the minister will tell us what he is doing right now to ensure that our veterans get the home health care that they need.

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: We have talked about this a couple of times, and it is a very serious issue. It is one that nobody had expected and nobody had wished for. However, VON, unfortunately, did close down its operations in New Brunswick as well as in five other provinces across the country. We have been working diligently on putting together a plan in response to that, a plan that I hope will be released by the end of the day today. We are working on this. A series of different programs was offered by VON. Not all of them were the responsibility of the province of New Brunswick, I might add. Other entities are responsible for some of them. However, we are working on a plan, and we will have it released by the end of the day today. I will make sure that the opposition receives a copy as soon as possible. Thank you.

