

December 18, 2015

[Original]

Former MLAs

Mr. Fitch: That is certainly a hard act to follow, I tell you, but it was all in good nature.

I really appreciate the opportunity to ask a few questions today. It looks as though it is the last day of the House. I do not believe that things happen by fate. Things happen for a reason. There is never coincidence. It was interesting yesterday. I went to the CBC panel, and I did not have a chance to have lunch. I went downstairs to grab a healthy sandwich from the Happy Baker, of course. Lo and behold, whom do I see? It was Jack Keir, of all people.

With the revelation that Shawn Graham is out to try to sell Mactaquac, now we see Jack Keir in the basement of the Legislature. Could the Premier tell us today what file he is working on? I asked Jack Keir what he was doing here, and I did not get an answer. It was almost as though he was back as Minister of Energy. Was Jack Keir here today to work on the Atcon file, to get the story straight, or was he here to sell the Mactaquac Dam?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: It is a bit unfortunate when the Christmas poems actually have more seriousness than the questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition.

This is the people's House. This is the Legislature of all New Brunswickers, and that means anybody who has ever been or never been an MLA. We, of course, welcome all New Brunswickers to come visit the Legislature. I have to tell you that it is just incredible to watch the opposition continuously talk about the past.

[Translation]

A person here today who was a member in 2005 would see no difference; the opposition is still talking about files from that time. This is very unfortunate because, in doing so, the opposition is missing another opportunity to have a good discussion on the future of our province. We have choices to make as a government, as a province, and as members; I am asking the opposition to participate in this process.

[Original]

Mr. Fitch: If people from the past are coming back to affect our future, I think that it is an important question.



I have my ticket purchased for *The Force Awakens* for this weekend, and I did not know when I saw Jack Keir whether it was *The Empire Strikes Back* or *The Phantom Menace*. There are always two. There is the Dark Lord and the Sith, or, I guess, the evil empire and the Sith.

Again, it is a very important question. We have talked about the Atcon Six. It looks as though we have the Atcon Seven out at Mactaquac and the Atcon Eight downstairs in the Legislature. What file was Jack Keir meeting on here in the House? I asked him the question. I said: What are you doing here? What file are you working on? I did not get an answer, just like the many times that we ask them here in the House. Can the Premier tell us which file Jack Keir was working on when he was in the House yesterday?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I have no idea why this person was here. He is welcome at the Legislative Assembly, as are all New Brunswickers; he has the right to come to Fredericton. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to convince us that anyone who comes to the Legislative Assembly must give him an explanation; I think that it is awful.

[*Original*]

One thing that I do know is that it is really time for this session to finish. It is time for question period to end. Over the past few days, we have seen that those members are only debating things that happened in 2006 to 2010, and, today, in the first two questions from the opposition, we found out where Jack Keir is. We found out that the member opposite knows some things about *Star Wars*, and we found out that he ate a healthy sandwich. I really do not see how this is bettering New Brunswick, considering that, before us, we have important choices to make as a society, as a province, and as a government. I ask the opposition to straighten up and to participate in the discussion.

Mr. Fitch: It is unfortunate that the Premier decides to take that tack. It is important because the people who made decisions that cost the province \$70 million in taxpayers' money in the past are coming back now and coming back to roost. Again, Shawn Graham could not sell NB Power when he was the Premier, and now he is trying to sell the Mactaquac Dam. Now, we have Jack Keir showing up a couple of days later. He was the orchestrator of the NB Power deal and was involved in Atcon as well. I checked all the napkins downstairs, and there were no agreements written on napkins. I am really comfortable with that.

Government Funding

I wonder whether the Premier could tell us this today. We are hearing news that, up in Bas-Caraquet, the NB Naval Center is closing. Again, based on the Premier's word—and he did not have one press conference but two press conferences to say it—the government was going to support that. Many companies did a lot of work and invested a lot of money, and now they are



owed a significant amount of money because the province reneged on that promise. The Premier can give us an update today.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I may as well join in on the fun. This is very interesting. Apparently, Michael Olscamp was here not too long ago. Let's make sure that we are very transparent on both sides of the Legislature.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Maybe the member opposite can tell us why Michael Olscamp was here. I think that the people of New Brunswick are just dying to know. I would really like to know what Claude Williams is up to.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Could the Leader of the Opposition give me a briefing on what Claude Williams has been up to over the last few weeks? Could I find out what Craig Leonard is up to—the one who said he would get full compensation for Point Lepreau cost overruns but never did? Could I find out where Margaret-Ann Blaney is? Could the Leader of the Opposition tell us where she is now that she is no longer working for Efficiency New Brunswick—a plum position that was given to her by the past government? Where is Bev Harrison? We are all wondering. All New Brunswickers are tuning in, watching today to find out where Bev Harrison is. Could the Leader of the Opposition brief us on this important matter of where all these former Tories are?

Mr. Fitch: Again, it is very telling when the Premier gets up today and goes on that diatribe. I actually introduced Michael Olscamp to the House. I actually introduced a former Liberal MLA, Carolle de Ste. Croix, in the House because the members opposite did not bother to do it. They did not bother to introduce one of their former colleagues, Carolle de Ste. Croix, and they hid the fact that Jack Keir was here in the basement. He is obviously working on some kind of secret plot that is going to come forward at some point in time, just as the Liberals did with the sale of NB Power.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fitch: Everybody woke up one day, and NB Power was sold. Jack Keir was the orchestrator of that.

Again, I am asking: In Bas-Caraquet, there are people who are owed millions of dollars. There will be employment layoffs because of that. Businesses will go under. That is happening today.



Let's get to today's issue. In Bas-Caraquet, people are being laid off because of your policy decision. Give us an update on that.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Once again, I cannot understand what the opposition is doing. Why is the Leader of the Opposition talking in the House about former members who are here visiting? They are all welcome here. We thank everyone who worked for the people of New Brunswick, even if, with regard to some of these members, we do not agree with their policies and their actions. These people were elected by the people of New Brunswick; therefore, we thank them. This applies to all members, whether they are from the opposition or the government, Conservatives or Liberals.

[*Original*]

I do not know if the member opposite wants us to acknowledge and thank him for the wonderful introduction that he gave the other day. Congratulations. I think that was fantastic. Good on the Leader of the Opposition for taking a minute to explain to the people of New Brunswick that he gave an introduction for Carolle de Ste. Croix. I think that is fantastic. We very much appreciate it. Hopefully, one day, we will be able to return the favour. If a former MLA who is a Conservative is here, I would be so happy to get up to introduce that MLA. Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

Mr. Fitch: It is no secret for us why Mike Olscamp was here. He was here to give Ted a cheque because he is going to rent his condo in Florida, but Ted would not give him the keys until he got the cheque. That is good business. Carolle de Ste. Croix was here because this government has been treating Mount A really poorly. It has not given Mount A any increase in tuition or any increase in funding. That is no secret, but it is a secret why Jack Keir was here in the House.

Let's get to today. I met with a number of companies that are owed significant amounts of money. It may end in those companies going bankrupt, and it may end up in companies certainly laying off employees. That is very contrary to the policies that this government said would create employment. I said: Why did you do the work? Why did you invest the money? They said: The Premier made the announcement that they would give the money to Bas-Caraquet and to the NB Naval Center. It was based on the Premier's word that they made the investment. Now, they are not getting paid. Premier, give us an update. Why are they not getting paid?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I will read into the record a quote by the Leader of the Opposition from March 20, 2015:



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...

There are a few other lines. He continued:

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?

We have the Leader of the Opposition, on March 20, 2015, trying to take credit for this file. We are not trying to take credit. We will take our responsibility. We are one of the financing partners. We are at the table, and, if the conditions are met, the project will move forward. It is as simple as that. Why is the Leader of the Opposition flip-flopping from trying to take the credit to putting the blame on us?

Mr. Fitch: When we left government, things were going pretty well. Now, based on announcements that the Premier made, not once but twice, with federal candidates who are now actually the MPs for that area standing beside him... People invested money based on the word of the Premier and the announcements that he made.

When we were there, it was going great. It has fallen off the rails. Now, it is closing today, and businesses are owed substantial amounts of money. They are under threat of being closed, and also there is a threat of many people being laid off at Christmas. We asked some of the companies why they invested in this, and they said: The Premier gave us his word in the announcements that the money was coming. Once again, Premier, what message are you going to give to these people up in Bas-Caraquet who are looking for a little bit of hope at Christmas?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: There are just so many comments that I did not have the time to finish, so I will finish with some others from the Leader of the Opposition.

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

—he said sarcastically—

and then we will make announcements on things like Groupe Océan in Bas-Caraquet.

Then, he said this:

Would the Premier commit today that, when the government makes this announcement... 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?



The Leader of the Opposition got up not too long ago, fighting us, criticizing us, and debating with us, because he wanted the credit for the work that is happening and that had been happening in Bas-Caraquet. Now, he gets up and wants us to take the blame. I ask the Leader of the Opposition: How can he flip-flop so quickly on a file? He wanted all the credit months ago, and he now wants to shift all the blame.

Mr. Fitch: Once again, for the record, when we left office, things were going well. It had been on the rails, and it looked very, very promising. Now, we have companies that are owed millions of dollars and people facing layoffs. The centre is closing today, as I understand it.

Again, the Premier wanted to take credit for it, and that is fine. Yes, we were part of that, and, when we were part of it, it was going okay. The Premier made announcements with the MP—the candidate who is now the MP—standing right beside him. I am just asking the Premier this today. While facing Christmas and facing holidays, people are facing layoffs and companies are facing closure because of the announcements that he made on this project. I am just asking for an update today. Premier, what are you doing personally to make sure that these companies do not fail and that the people do not get laid off?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: For the second time this morning, the Leader of the Opposition is speaking directly to us; in fact, this is not the first time that opposition members have done so. I believe it is important to respect people in the House.

[Original]

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: As I just said, it is actually the Leader of the Opposition who tried to take the credit on this file. However, as soon as there is trouble, he wants to blame other people. That is not the way a leader should act; it is not the way a leader should act.

What are we doing on our side? We continue to do exactly what we said we would do on this file. We are at the table, and we are one of the financial partners with the federal government and the communities. We are still at the table, and, if conditions can be met in this project, we will continue to be a partner. So, is the Leader of the Opposition asking us to put the conditions aside and move forward? It is not prudent to do that, because conditions were put in place. In fact, we will respect the agreement that we established with all our partners.



[Original]

Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements

Mr. Jeff Carr: Yesterday, I had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Public Safety a question on the topic of the Disaster Financial Assistance Program for many rural New Brunswickers who have experienced a lot of damage and lost a lot of goods and much of their livelihood to the storm. In the past, with previous storms, the program was set up and launched within days or within a week or two. We have now been waiting almost 80 days. It will be 80 days tomorrow since the storm happened, and there is still not a peep.

Regarding the answer that the minister gave yesterday, I echo his sentiments about how good the response was to get the roads open. The emergency people were there. The members of EMO were at their doors asking them to register.

I would like to know this today: Will there be a program for the people of southern and central New Brunswick to apply for so that they can register their disaster assistance needs?

Hon. Mr. Horsman: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Our first priority is helping New Brunswickers to safely recover from these events and reoccupy their homes and businesses, and we will continue to do that.

Again, I was honoured to receive calls from the members opposite, from the member for Kings Centre, I believe, and also from the member for New Maryland-Sunbury. Immediately, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and I went out to their areas. At that time, people were in dire straits. An event took place—a heavy rainfall that washed out roads and compromised bridges—and we did not want to bring politics into this at all. We immediately took action. We hired people to work on the roads and start the reconstruction of bridges right away, to help New Brunswickers get to stores or get to hospitals, if need be. We will continue to do that. There is always a process in place. We have had good communication with the member opposite, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Jeff Carr: When the lives of New Brunswickers and their pocketbooks are at stake, there is no politics involved at all. I am only asking the question: Will there be an opportunity for these people to register? I agree that the ministers—more than one—visited our areas. However, that is not the answer to the question.

Let's take the politics out of it, and let's stand up. The minister is a great fellow. I have known him for a long time. I know many members of his family. He had a good upbringing, with good Oromocto people. However, we need to know this: What are the answers for these people who have had to pay out of their pockets, who have lost livestock and feed for their livestock, which is their livelihood, and have lost vehicles and houses? People have lost houses. More than 80 days is way too long to start the process of applications. That should have been done weeks



ago. We need to know now. Will there be a program? Have we met the thresholds for a program in this province?

Hon. Mr. Melanson: I am glad that the opposition agrees that, with these types of severe damages, politics should not be a criterion for how we react to this situation. I want to thank the member opposite who got up over the past few days to congratulate and say thank you for the hard work that this government has done in reaction. I would like to remind the members and certainly, New Brunswickers that there were over 58 roads and areas that were damaged over about 24 hours. Today, I am happy to say that there are only about 6 that need to be repaired.

I know that there are some houses and private properties that were damaged. The inventory is being gathered, and work is being done. However, the damage of the September 30 storm was over \$15 million. We are certainly gathering all the information and making sure that the right process is followed. Then we will see what happens.

Mr. Jeff Carr: I fully understand that a large percentage of the roads have been fixed, and so do regular New Brunswickers. They appreciate that. However, if the members on the government side are in this job for a thank-you, they are in the wrong line of work, folks. They are in the wrong line of work. I will tell you right now that thank yous are few and far between.

The people of my riding and the people in the ridings of Kings Centre and Gagetown-Petitcodiac have lost a considerable amount of their personal assets to have that replaced. They have had to pay out of their own pockets. Right now, especially at Christmastime, they still wonder and they want to know: Who is holding up this process? Has this process been held up because they live in opposition ridings? The minister says that they are still gathering information. I have an e-mail right here that says: I can confirm that this is in the queue, and we expect a government...

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: It is unfortunate. There was a good dialogue happening on the floor of the Legislature until that last question.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The member for New Maryland-Sunbury will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: For the member opposite to make a political accusation, saying that we would not help the families that have been affected by this because they are in an opposition riding, is completely false. It is not appreciated.

(Interjections.)



Mr. Speaker: The member for New Maryland-Sunbury will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: As I said, we were having a good dialogue before that last question. I think it is unfortunate. It is odd that, in the question, the member opposite said that the roads have been fixed, so our government has been reacting to this terrible situation right away. I believe he is quoting from emails, and he is saying that we are on this and that there will be something to move forward with shortly.

I have to point out that the opposition supported the Harper government when it made changes that would put more fiscal burden on the province when it came to disaster financial assistance.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Again, member for New Maryland-Sunbury, this is the final warning.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Why would the member opposite not have spoken then, when the Harper government was making it harder for us to help families in New Brunswick when there was a disaster?

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Government Funding

Mr. Holder: The Saint John City Market is the oldest continuing farmers' market in Canada. As with anything else that is getting old, it needs a little bit of tender loving care once in a while. It is the number one funding priority of the city of Saint John to upgrade the Saint John City Market. It is a \$6-million project. The city of Saint John has put \$2 million on the table. The federal government, over two different administrations, has confirmed its money. This was the priority of the 2015 capital budget in Saint John. It has yet to hear back from the province.

My question today is for the Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation. When can we have an answer?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: I can confirm that, yes, the application has been received. It is being considered. Since the federal election and the change in the federal government, there has been a bit of a delay in looking at the projects to make sure that both governments are on the same page on their respective projects.

Again, I think that this is a perfect example of what we have seen from the opposition members. On the one hand, they criticize our investments in infrastructure. Then, on the other hand, they get up and advocate for infrastructure projects that affect their ridings. You cannot have it both ways. You have to pick. Are you in favour of infrastructure investments, or are you



not? This constant picking and choosing depending on where the project is in the province does not do anybody a service.

Mr. Holder: Based on that lack of commitment, all bets are off. I can tell the member opposite that this is based on the clear public funding priorities of the city of Saint John. The city has not asked for the moon here. This is its only funding commitment from last year, and it was not met by the provincial government. The federal government has been committed for months. Both governments at the federal level have been committed to this. The city's money is on the table. I am giving the minister an opportunity today to commit to the oldest continuing farmers' market in the country, the centrepiece for tourism and heritage in Saint John.

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: As I have said, the project is under consideration. There are more requests than there is money, I can assure you of that. We are taking the time to let the new federal government get in place. At one point, civil servants from both levels of government are going to have to go through their respective lists of submitted projects. We are going to come to some arrangements and, in due course, we will be able to make some announcements.

Again, it is the mixed messaging coming from the other side. Just yesterday, the members opposite voted against the capital budget. Guess what! The capital budget is investments in infrastructure. Again, they are against infrastructure investments, they vote against our capital budget, but then they get up and advocate on behalf of projects in their ridings. Which is it? Do they agree with infrastructure investments? Yes or no?

Mr. Holder: We are in favour of infrastructure investments that are based on clear public funding priorities that communities work on together. This is a community that has made it very clear, over two budgets—last year's and the one it just passed yesterday—that this is its number one infrastructure funding commitment. This is a tourism icon in Saint John. If cruise ship passengers have been to Saint John before, when they get off the boat, it is a place they cannot wait to get back to. We are asking this government to believe in it. What is it going to take? Is it going to take Saint John Tory MLAs to embarrass the government into it, as we had to do with the port announcement?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I completely agree with the minister; it is absurd to once again see opposition members say that they are against investments in infrastructure, when today they are proposing to invest in infrastructure projects.

[Original]

Again, the member opposite is showing that the opposition members have not been clear. I ask the media, who is listening, and New Brunswickers to ask the opposition members to clarify their remarks. They are certainly not doing that for us on the floor of the Legislature. The



member opposite is just another example of those members talking only about infrastructure investments that are in their ridings and their regions.

It is unfortunate to see that the member opposite is also trying to take credit for the investment at the port of Saint John. Different levels of government, of different stripes, are involved in that, which is fantastic, and we are not going to take credit for it. It is the money of New Brunswickers that we are investing strategically to create jobs at the port of Saint John. The members opposite want to take advantage and try to push infrastructure projects and to take the credit. Are you for it or against it?

Midwifery

Mr. Coon: Last May, the Minister of Health addressed some questions that I had during question period regarding the integration of midwives into our health care system. At that time, he said, “it is very clear that we are committed to including midwives and making sure that they participate to the full of their scope”. That is his quote. Can the Minister of Health tell this House when he is going to make good on this commitment?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: I thank the member opposite for the question. It is a file that is still very active within the department. We are working to move this file forward. In our platform, we committed to broaden the scope and to get more health care professionals involved in primary care, and we specifically talked about midwives. The project is making its way through. It is a file that is somewhat complicated because it is totally new to our system. There are a lot of regulations to be changed, legislation that needs to be adjusted, and policies that need to be either adjusted or put in place. It is an ongoing file. It is something that we are working on very actively, and I certainly hope to have some positive news in the new year.

Mr. Coon: This sounds like a long and difficult labour. Women in New Brunswick want to be able to access midwives today. We passed the needed legislation in 2008, and we developed the essential regulations in 2012. Is it simply a question of the minister being too push to push the integration of midwives into our health care system?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: I am not quite sure what that expression means, but I can tell you that I am in favour of including midwives in our health care system. It is something that we, as a party, committed to very clearly. They are specifically mentioned in our platform. It is one of 24 platform commitments that, as the Minister of Health, I am responsible for. There is work being done on all these platform commitments. However, we were elected for a four-year mandate, and some of these will come in due time and after due process. It is very much an active file. I have reached out, and I have had many conversations over the past year with different midwives and representatives of the Midwives Association of New Brunswick. It is an active file that we are working on. As I said, I am very confident that we will have some positive news in the new year.



Mr. Coon: I am sure that families in New Brunswick would hope for this file to be birthed sooner rather than later. Research has shown that midwives improve the well-being of moms and babies in a variety of ways. In fact, implementing midwifery in New Brunswick could also save \$1.1 million per year. Given that information and given that the legislation and regulations are in place, will the minister ensure that women in New Brunswick will be able to access midwifery in 2016?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: As the minister indicated, we agree with the comments made by the member for Fredericton South. It is a good project, and this file will move forward over the course of 2016.

[Original]

I just have to point out to New Brunswickers—more so to the opposition members—that since we came here in December, approximately 130 questions have been asked in this Legislature during question period. Of those, approximately 5 questions have been asked about our *Choices* report. I do not know whether the opposition members took the time—it would probably take about 20 minutes—to read this report. This report is incredibly important for the future of our province.

We have financial challenges, and we have to overcome these challenges if we want to invest in our priorities of creating jobs, investing in education, and improving health care in our province. That approximately 4% of the questions in the Legislature have been asked about this important document, which the *Globe and Mail* commented on today, I think, is unfortunate. We need the opposition members to step up in the new year in terms of the right discussion.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The time for oral questions has expired.

