

May 20, 2016

[Original]

Legislation

Mr. Fitch: On January 22, 2008, CBC New Brunswick released a story, and the headline said that “NB allegedly wanted to award a \$1.4B contract without public tender”. Of course, the government was the Graham Liberal government. We know that it was the training ground for many of the ministers who are present here today with the Gallant government. That untendered contract would go to a company named—wait for it—Atcon. You knew that was coming.

Bill 12, the Gallant patronage procurement plan, should raise red flags because of the history of the Cabinet ministers and the former Graham government. I know that the Premier is jetting away shortly, next week, so I want to give him one more option here today to answer the question as to why he has not stood and defended Bill 12 in the Legislature.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I would like to start off with addressing the member statements from the opposition. First, this is not the last question period.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: This is not the last question period. If the members opposite read the news, they would know that we have made it very clear that, if they feel they need more weeks, we are going to come back. In fact, we are going to come back on June 28 to ensure that there are more question periods.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The member for Oromocto-Lincoln will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: However, I will say that the opposition is filibustering simply to filibuster. It is not for me to judge, but I invite the media and I invite New Brunswickers to watch the questions and to watch these speeches of the opposition in order to judge whether they think that the members opposite are actually here because they want to have substantive discussion and debate or because they would just like to score some headlines and political points.

As well, I would like to go through... I will do it in the next question, since this is obviously important to the opposition.



(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: The member for Oromocto-Lincoln will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I will go through what I will be up to over the next couple of weeks to let them know what we are doing to try to advance the priorities of New Brunswickers—growing the economy, investing in education, and having the best health care system possible.

Mr. Fitch: The Premier needs to answer this question. He has eluded it. He has ignored it. Now, again, he is going to jet off without the Legislature in session. The issue is democracy. This government put seven bills on the floor of the Legislature on Tuesday and then expected to adjourn on Friday and have them all passed. That is an unacceptable assault on democracy. The Premier can stand here and say that we are filibustering, but the point is that there are seven bills—one with 143 pages. We will take the time to examine those bills and make sure that they are done right.

I will ask again. Bill 12, which was in committee, was abruptly stopped and taken off the docket. This is a bill that the Speaker of the House knows about, and we want the Premier to answer why this procurement bill was taken out all of a sudden.

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We have just said that this is not the last day, so I am not sure what the member opposite is talking about. We have just said that on June 28, we will be back.

The member talked about Bill 45, *An Act Respecting the Enforcement of Financial and Consumer Services Legislation*. This was presented by the FCNB, which was created by the past government. These are things that the commission wants to have happen so that it can better serve the people of New Brunswick within its mandate.

We offered the opposition members a technical briefing on that bill, and they have yet to answer us. Why is it that the Leader of the Opposition has the audacity to get up on his feet today and talk about that bill, saying that he has to scrutinize it, when he will not even get the officials—not us, the officials—to come in and give the opposition members a technical briefing so that they can understand what the 143 pages of legislation will do under a service that was created by the previous government?

Again, I ask the people of New Brunswick and the media to really question whether these people want to have a substantive debate or whether they are trying to score political points.

Mr. Fitch: Once again, we see the Premier showing a lack of respect for the House and for the Legislature. Do you know what? We will have a briefing from the bureaucrats because we know that we do not get answers from the ministers when bills go to committee. We can look at various bills. Minister after minister stood up and just ridiculed and became political and did



not answer the questions. That, again, is why we need to shine a spotlight on democracy and shine a spotlight on ministers here in the House. It is because when they get to committee, they just go stone-cold and do not answer a question at all. That is why we will continue to ask those questions.

Student Aid

Anyway, we have breaking news here today. It looks as though the New Brunswick Association of Private Colleges and Universities is considering suing this government because of lack of consultation on the TAB program. I tend to agree that this has to be done. The association has retained none other than former Liberal Finance Minister Mike Murphy.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Mike Murphy was never Finance Minister.

Here is what I am up to over the next couple of weeks. I am going to be announcing jobs for the people of Bathurst. I am going to be announcing jobs for the people of Saint John. I am going to go to the CCNB graduations in Campbellton, Shippagan, and Dieppe. I am going to be going to the New Brunswick Community College graduations in Miramichi, Woodstock, Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, and Saint Andrews. I will also be participating in a dinner to celebrate graduations at the institutions of the Université de Moncton and CCNB in Edmundston.

We will be going to a charity event to help a guy named Joël Gallant, who was in a terrible accident a few years ago. It will raise money to help him and his family deal with the new circumstances in which they find themselves. I am also going to be participating in the Three Fathers Memorial Run. It is obviously very important for the province to remember the three fallen officers who lost their lives on June 4 just a few years ago. I will be going to the monument unveiling ceremony, which is among many opportunities to do things for the province.

Mr. Fitch: Once again, the Premier sounds like a bad infomercial. It is worse than the Shake Weight or something.

The fact of the matter is that we will be attending a number of those as well. The point is that the government members are attacking democracy. They are adjourning the House today, or so we have been led to believe by the House Leader. There are some unanswered questions on some very important pieces of legislation that the government announced outside the Legislature.

Again, it is contempt for the Legislature when the government announces big, big items such as the TAB program without the scrutiny of the Legislature. Now, the government is getting sued by a former Health Minister of the province. My money is on Mike Murphy because this bunch has had a dismal, dismal record in the House of the Legislature.



Again, can the Premier reset the button on the TAB program, put a one-year moratorium on it, consult with and participate in a working group, as requested by the...

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: In his preamble, the Leader of the Opposition talks about one thing, but his questions are on other issues.

I checked my schedule for the next few weeks, and I want to emphasize again that we are going to spend a lot of time meeting people in communities throughout our province to find out about what their challenges and prospects for the future are. I also want to reiterate that we will be back in the Legislative Assembly on June 28. Since it is the third time I have said this, maybe the Leader of the Opposition will finally understand: Yes, we are going to come back.

Opposition members say they would like more time to ask questions, so we will indeed come back on June 28 to have question periods and examine bills that we have tabled. We hope to have a real discussion, and not a discussion based on politics in order to attract media attention.

[*Original*]

Mr. Speaker: Time, Premier.

Judges

Mr. Fitch: Again, the purpose of the House is democracy, and this government seems to want to attack democracy by adjourning and coming back when people will be picking up kids with their report cards and heading out to the shore or the cottage or going on vacation. There will be much less scrutiny in the House on June 28 than there is right now. We think that is an assault on democracy. It is contempt for the Legislature, and that is the Liberal way. That is what we have seen day in, day out.

I want to talk about another item of contempt, as this government tries to put its hand into the affairs of the judges in the province. I have a question for the Attorney General. He has been told that he should argue both sides of the argument, but he says that he wants to have one side and not the other. Where does he stand on the *Judicature Act* that is on the floor of the Legislature right now? Does he concur with David Smith, or does he concur with the Minister of Justice?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I am not letting the Leader of the Opposition get away with giving this preamble and then asking a question that is completely unrelated to the preamble. Is it an assault on democracy for us to come back on June 28? Is it an assault on democracy for us to



ask the Legislature and the opposition MLAs to come here on June 28? Is that an assault on democracy? I do not know about the opposition members, but we work 365 days a year to try to advance this province. If the member opposite had plans for the summer, we apologize, because there is important work that has to be done.

To the opposition's point, let's come to this Legislature to debate the future of our province. The opposition members wanted more time, and we are going to give it to them on June 28. However, once again, I will invite the media and the people of the province to watch what the opposition says, the questions and the speeches, so that it is not just about getting headlines but about moving the province forward.

Mr. Fitch: We have seen the results of this particular government and how it has moved the province backward in many areas as well. I have a question with respect to the government trying to interfere with judges and their location of residence in New Brunswick. I have a straightforward question for the Attorney General. Does he agree with Chief Justice David Smith, or does he agree with the bill that is on the floor of the Legislature, which is going to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, that was put forward by the Minister of Justice? He should rise and answer this straightforward question because it is an important question for New Brunswick.

Hon. Mr. Horsman: It is an honour to get up and answer the question. It is very simple. We want to work with the Chief Justice. We want to include the judges. I know that the members of the opposition do not include the judges. I have had several judges... They think that it is all negative and that it is all against what we are trying to do. However, we are including people. The member of the third party also stated that he wants to see more consultation with people. Well, that is what we are trying to do. We are trying to include more people in the decision-making in this province.

We are not interfering with justice in this matter. As a matter of fact, they need to know that Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan do not even consult with the Justice Minister when they appoint places for judges to live. We are not to the far left, we are not the far right, but we are right in the middle. We are including judges, Your Honour... I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I feel as though I am back in court.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Horsman: It is very important to include the judges, and I have had many judges call me and tell me personally that they are very happy that this decision is going ahead because they did not want to be moved. They are having a say in this matter now. Thank you.



Nursing Homes

Mr. Steeves: Will the Minister of Social Development reveal the government's plans for nursing homes today? Yesterday, the minister did not respond. There are concerns, once again, that if the Gallant government has the finances of the nursing homes on the province's books, it will allow the province to claim a need to raise nursing home rates. We are just wondering, very simply, whether that is part of the plan.

Hon. Mr. Melanson: We addressed this yesterday. The question was asked yesterday. We are considering following up on the recommendations of the Auditor General. As we know, the province of New Brunswick pays the per diems for the operations of nursing homes. They have local entities, boards of directors, that make decisions on their operations. That is not going to change.

What is being considered now is based on the recommendations. The value of the nursing home assets would be accounted for on the books of the province of New Brunswick. It would be an accounting exercise only. We have no intention of interfering in the decision-making of how they operate their nursing homes. It would be an accounting exercise, so we would account for the asset value on the books of the province.

Mr. Steeves: Forgive me if I do not have as much faith in your accounting practices as you do. I also wish that you would take the Auditor General's recommendations on the Atcon report. That would be nice too.

What worries me is that we have been conditioned to be suspicious of this government's moves. We have all witnessed the government defending the seniors' asset grab as a really good policy that was just poorly communicated and not understood by the people that it would hurt. We have heard talk about assets. We have not heard talk about liabilities.

We just worry that the government is going to interfere with these corporations and with private persons in particular. What is the government going to do with the assets that are acquired by the foundations that often are greatly involved in running these organizations? What happens to those assets?

Hon. Mr. Melanson: The opposition members claim that there is not enough time to do work on the floor of the Legislature, and they keep asking the same questions over and over. In the spirit of openness and transparency, I have been very open, and the government has been very open. The Comptroller of the province met with the Nursing Home Association last week to explain and to get feedback on what is being considered here.

The fact is that we are being open and transparent and giving all the information regarding what is being considered, but the opposition still has a way to turn this around to a negative. All that we are considering is to follow the recommendations of the Auditor General of New Brunswick and to account for the asset value of nursing homes on the books of the province.



That is what is being considered at this time. We are not looking to take over the operations of nursing homes. We already fund the per diems for the operations. They have their own boards of directors. That is all that we are doing.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Mr. Steeves: I guess that still does not answer my question. I am wondering about the foundations that help to run these organizations—these corporations, if you will. These foundations have acquired assets for these corporations. What is going to happen to them? Are they on the assets? What are the liabilities? I know that you have not told us that yet, but you are interfering with corporations. Are you going to be interfering with private persons next? I am wondering whether this government has de jure control to put them on the government books. Does it have that control now to put them on the government books?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: This is a great example of a bit of the hypocrisy that we see from the opposition. The members opposite want us to follow the reports and recommendations of the Auditor General when that suits their political ambitions. We have made it clear that we are going to be looking at the recommendation of the Auditor General, yet the members opposite are trying to question that recommendation. If the member opposite has questions, he can also call the Auditor General, instead of repeating the same questions here in the Legislature and having the same answer, which is a good answer, by the minister.

This is not the first time that we have seen this hypocrisy. I would like the member for Portland-Simonds to get up and finally condemn the fact that Rodney Weston gave the impression to the people of Saint John that the federal government was going to be at the table with the port.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I would love to have the member for Riverview get up and criticize Rona Ambrose for coming here and doing a fundraiser in New Brunswick when she was allegedly on government business. I think that the opposition members have to look themselves in the mirror and really start to use this Legislature for what it is for—substantive debate.

[*Translation*]

Extra-Mural Program

Ms. Dubé: The minister seems annoyed when I ask questions about the Extra-Mural Program. However, I think New Brunswickers are really annoyed and worried that the minister will continue his negotiations behind closed doors during the upcoming adjournment, and that, in the end, he will reach an agreement with Medavie EMS.



So we asked several questions about this in the House, but we still did not get any answer. Today is the last sitting day before June 28, when people will be on vacation. This is what the government wants, for us to ask questions when people are not there. I am giving the minister the opportunity to answer this question: In your negotiations, do you take compliance with the Act governing medical care into account, which, of course, includes free care and services at all times?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: This is incredible. I encourage the member opposite to pick up her BlackBerry. I know we are not supposed to use this type of device in the House during question period, but it has a recording function. Maybe if the member opposite records my answer she will remember it tomorrow. We have answered the same questions over and over.

We are in discussions with Medavie EMS. Certainly, all Acts in effect will be complied with, whether it be the Act to which the member opposite is referring or the *Personal Health Information Privacy and Access Act*. All the various Acts that are in effect will obviously be complied with. The goal here is to provide quality health care services to New Brunswickers, and all the better if we can do it with the help of Medavie EMS.

Ms. Dubé: We see that the minister is still annoyed, but it is the people who are annoyed and concerned because we never get firm answers. Despite people's concerns, the minister continues to negotiate behind closed doors. He has just confirmed it once again.

Another question we asked here, in the House, was about the consultation process. The government said it had consulted unions, employees, and, of course, the company, with which it held negotiations. We also asked about the people who are receiving services under the program and are the main ones affected. In all these negotiations, New Brunswickers are the ones who are most affected. The Extra-Mural Program is a gem. Is the minister going to stop discussions and consult New Brunswickers, the ones who receive services under the Extra-Mural Program?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: On this side of the House, we have never once suggested that the Extra-Mural Program is not a fantastic program. It offers great service to the entire province. It is the pride and joy of the province.

That being said, no program is perfect. If you look at the last survey results that came out from the New Brunswick Health Council, you will see that they actually showed a slight dip in public support for the work that the Extra-Mural Program does. That was ever so slight. However, this is only to say that no program is perfect.

We have three very good programs right now, whether it be the Extra-Mural Program, Ambulance New Brunswick, or Tele-Care 811. All we are looking at doing is maximizing the strength and the resources of each one of those three programs to make sure that we are



getting the best value for every dollar invested in that program and that we are providing top quality care to New Brunswickers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Dubé: The Extra-Mural Program is good; it is of very high quality. So why does the government want to tinker with a good program that provides good services? Every time the government has tinkered with something through its reforms, it has messed things up.

The Extra-Mural Program works well. We need it, since it is a gem. The one and only reason given so far by the minister to explain why he wants to transfer the management of this program to a private company is that this company has a better computer system. That has nothing to do with the quality of care. Quality of care is a matter of primary concern for the Horizon and Vitalité Health Networks. As we know, everything is about performance and profitability for a private company.

We are asking the minister to put an end to his discussions behind closed doors and to continue supporting the Extra-Mural Program. If he wants to enhance it...

[*Original*]

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: Again, the fearmongering and referring to the private sector... This is a nonprofit company that is based in New Brunswick that provides hundreds of jobs to New Brunswickers, and it has a proven track record in health care. Again, this is also about working with three very good programs and making sure that we are getting maximum use. When you look at our health outcomes in New Brunswick, you see that they are not the best. They are not where they need to be. If we continue doing the same things over and over again, we cannot expect better results.

We need to look at doing things differently. We need to look at being able to focus on the 5% of chronic users of the system. We need to make sure that we are working with those people to help them get better, to help them better manage their chronic disease, and to keep them out of hospitals and nursing homes for as long as possible. That is what this program is about, and those are the discussions that we are having. No deal has been set. When one is, if we get there...

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.



[Translation]

First Nations

Mr. Coon: We have a lot of work to do in the House.

[Original]

So much work, so little time. For example, on May 10, the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Carolyn Bennett, removed Canada's objector status to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, stating that we are now full supporters of the declaration, without qualification. Chief Ron Tremblay, representing the Wolastoq Grand Council, sat with her and the Minister of Justice at the UN, in New York, on that historic day.

My question is for the Premier. How will Canada's endorsement of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples change the relationship between First Nations in New Brunswick and his office and the Executive Council?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: First of all, I want to reiterate once again that we will come back to the Legislative Assembly on June 28. I want to be straightforward: We expect a little bit more from the member for Fredericton South. I hope he listens to the answers to questions. I think this is the sixth time that I have said this this morning: We will come back. So, I think that all comments saying that we do not have enough time are not the right approach to be taking. Obviously, we will come back to this House; I do not know how I could be any clearer about this.

Secondly, as for our relations with First Nations, it must be understood that, if we want to move our province forward, it is very important to have good relations with them, since they are important to New Brunswick. I can tell you that we are working very hard; the minister is meeting them at every opportunity to understand the challenges and the opportunities. In fact, we were very happy to work with them yesterday to announce the creation of 145 jobs for First Nations here in New Brunswick.

[Original]

Mr. Coon: I hope that the Premier noticed the other day that the provincial government of British Columbia was ordered to pay the court fees on behalf of two First Nations of that province after failing to meet its legal obligations to consult, in that case on the Northern Gateway Pipeline Project.

Now, the Mi'kmaq of New Brunswick are taking the New Brunswick government to court over its failure to consult on forest policy changes and the impact of long-term contracts signed with



the industry, which granted substantial increases in cutting volumes at the expense of wildlife. If the courts grant that injunction being sought by the Mi'kmaq, what is the Premier's Plan B for timber allocation and the management of our Crown lands?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: If the member for Fredericton South would like to get answers about the consultations with First Nations on the Strategy for Crown Lands Forest Management, he should talk to the people on his right.

We are currently in government, but the forestry strategy was established by the previous Conservative government. A commitment was made to ensure that all stakeholders in the province were consulted about the forestry industry, which is so important to our economy.

The Minister of Natural Resources is working very hard on this file, and, as he has already said several times, he is doing so in a very transparent way. It is obvious that the previous government did no consultation whatsoever. Therefore, it will take longer to achieve this strategy, since we want to make sure that we meet all stakeholders and anyone who has suggestions or concerns about the forestry strategy implemented by the previous government. We are going to ensure that the strategy is established and helps us grow the economy.

[*Original*]

Mr. Coon: This is exactly the problem. The Premier is referring to First Nations as stakeholders. The First Nations are rights holders in this province, and the First Nations are rights holders in this country, as guaranteed by the Constitution of our country.

This is the question. The relationship between New Brunswick and the Passamaquoddy, Wolastoqiyik, and Mi'kmaq First Nations obviously needs considerable work. How does the Premier intend to build a functional relationship with the First Nations of New Brunswick? His own commission on hydro fracking pointed out that there was essentially no working relationship with First Nations in this province—a relationship that reflects our treaty relationship, incorporates the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and respects the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I can tell you that the member is right that we have to work very hard to build a relationship with First Nations in this province because of the work of the last government. There is no doubt that a lot of work has to be done to build a strong relationship, and I can tell you that our government is focused on doing that because we recognize that, by working together with all New Brunswickers and our First Nations communities, we are going to be able to advance our province.



I can tell you that I have met with the First Nations. We have called them. We have had many events in First Nations communities as well as a caucus. We have had many meetings. I can tell you that the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs has met and spoken with the chiefs several times. Let's do a show of hands of all the people here who have met with First Nations on several files. We are working very hard... There are two on the other side. We are working very hard to build the relationship because we know that it is important to work together to grow the economy. We proved how we can do that just yesterday by creating 145 jobs for First Nations in New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker: This is the final question.

Student Employment

Mr. Keirstead: My question is for the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour with regard to the SEED Program. We are moving into the Victoria Day weekend, which is when many of our tourism operators get going for the year. We invest many dollars through the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture to bring people to our beautiful province. My riding includes one of the busiest corridors in Eastern Canada with Fundy Park, Cape Enrage, and the Hopewell Rocks.

With the new system, we have tourist information centres that cannot open, pools that cannot open, and museums that have reduced hours if they can open at all. The system is flawed and not working. We want our students working. How will the minister address these issues and fix this flawed program before it is too late for 2016?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: As for this program, it was actually the opposition that had concerns, and we made changes based on the concerns and suggestions that we received. In fact, we even increased the number of work weeks for our young people in the province.

[*Original*]

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: In addition, we have ensured that MLAs are not involved in choosing who will get work weeks and that the program is more focused on the training needs of young people. So, we are very proud of the changes we made based on the recommendations of the opposition.



[Original]

I have to say that youth employment and youth unemployment, more specifically, are focuses of our government. That is why we are working so hard to create jobs with our stakeholders and with the private sector. I am happy to say that there was a 1.9% increase in the GDP in 2015, which was the largest since 2010, and the second-largest wage increase in the country.

(Interjections.)

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

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The member for Portland-Simonds will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We have WestJet, 400 jobs; OrganiGram, 100 jobs; DEW in Miramichi, 100 jobs; 145 jobs yesterday; and IBM, 250 jobs.

Mr. Speaker: Time, Premier.

