

July 8, 2016

[Original]

Opportunities New Brunswick

Mr. Fitch: Just to be fair and in the spirit of cooperation on the last day before the Legislature rises, I am going to give the Minister responsible for Opportunities New Brunswick one final chance to get up and tell us whether she has had the opportunity to walk down to the ONB head office on King Street and ask for the annual report.

[Translation]

Hon. Mrs. Landry: It is a great pleasure for me to rise in the House today to tell the Leader of the Opposition one last time that the annual report for Opportunities New Brunswick, like those of other Crown corporations, will be tabled by the end of July. Once the financial statements are audited, a final report will be presented, as early as this fall.

I would like to remind the House that Opportunities New Brunswick is the first point of contact for New Brunswick businesses and for our entrepreneurs. Opportunities New Brunswick has offices throughout the province and does excellent work to help our businesses create jobs and increase exports. That is why we have recently announced that several businesses had created jobs here at home.

[Original]

Legislative Assembly

Mr. Fitch: It is nice that the Premier allowed the minister to get up and answer that question after so many times being asked, and it is good that the minister finally found her speaking notes on that particular topic.

I am surprised that the Premier did not get up and talk about select committees this morning because it has been in the news and on their minds lately. However, when you look at things such as the select committee that is required under the Act to renew the Consumer Advocate for Insurance and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner that expired in June, there has been no mention of those at all. I would like to ask the Premier this: Why have you not complied with the Act and created a select committee on those particular items?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Legislative officers are doing their work. We have people to take on the responsibilities associated with the vacant positions. Obviously, we want to see if it is possible



to find efficiencies within these offices; we said that a few months ago. When we are about to put measures in place that will enable us to find efficiencies, we will make sure to fill the vacant positions.

What is important for me today is to see that the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about committees. I still find it very surprising that opposition members are not prepared to participate with us in a nonpartisan process, in which we will give the majority to the opposition and third party members, to discuss the important subject of electoral reform. I hope that, today, the Leader of the Opposition will confirm the participation of the members of his party.

[Original]

Mr. Fitch: I would remind the Premier that the majority would lie with the Leader of the Green Party, who has already talked about that in the media.

Again, if the members opposite would reach out and try to have a conversation about this, as opposed to trying to beat us over the head in the Legislature and trying to embarrass us... I have said all along that there are options that would allow this to go forward, and the members across the way do not seem to want to be respectful of that at all.

I guess it comes down to why we are here on July 8. The new rules that were put in place for this House have not worked. We have had the fewest sitting days, the fewest bills, and the most bills retracted or sent to the law amendments committee. Either the Premier has to admit that his calendar is more important than doing the work of the Legislature or the rules that the government has put in place for the Legislature just do not work. Which is it?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: A few things have been made clear with the statements of the Leader of the Opposition. His real issue with the steering committee that we are trying to put in place in the Legislature to discuss electoral reform is that the member for Fredericton South, the Leader of the Green Party, would have a substantial vote in that process. Clearly, that is his issue. He is right. The majority would not be with the opposition. The majority would not be with the government. The majority would have to be two political parties agreeing with the reforms that were put forward. I think that is fantastic. Actually, I think that is the definition of “nonpartisan”.

It is very unfortunate to see that the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives refuse to work with other political parties. We have made a structure in which two of the three political parties would have to be in agreement with any of the recommendations that would be put forward. We would do this after an extensive time of consulting with New Brunswickers, and we would have a good, nonpartisan discussion. Join the table. That is what I say to the opposition.

Mr. Fitch: Again, the Premier knows very well that when the committee report is done, it goes back to the government to make the decisions. We have seen the results of the rule changes



here in the Legislature, based on the rules that they put in place in LAC. There was no discussion. There was just a steamroller approach: Here are the rules.

Even in the statements this morning, the House Leader could have come to us and said: We want to have an extended statement for a very, very important issue. But, no, they just came to the House with a sense of entitlement, thinking that everyone will just go along with what they do.

This is the way that we think the House should run. There could be meetings. Mr. Speaker, even you could get together with us and with the House Leaders and come up with a solution on problems like this instead of this being sprung on us at the last minute. Will the Premier admit that the rules the government put in place do not serve the people well here in the Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The opposition is clearly excited because there was an article in one of the newspapers regarding the sitting days. I actually thought that the article was very helpful. Unfortunately, it did not make the connection within the article, so I will make it here today.

The article talked about the number of sitting days from January 1 to the end of May, and it pointed out that, in New Brunswick, there were 20 sitting days in that time period while the average was 30 across the country. I think that is very helpful. Unfortunately, the article did not finish the sentence, in my opinion. It should have added that we now have to add 8 to the sitting days in New Brunswick because we just went from June 28 to today. That is 8 more days when we have come to have question period. That brings us to 28, which is right in line with the average across the country.

Our rules, the rules that have been put forward, are helping democracy. They are allowing us to have more scrutiny in committee, they are allowing us to have question period, and they are allowing us to discuss the priorities of New Brunswickers—the economy, education, and health care.

Mr. Fitch: Again, the proof is in the pudding when we look at this government. We have pointed out that the rules of the House have not been working. The Premier's schedule takes priority over it, and that is evident today.

We have seen the results of a number of the committees that the government has put forward. We have seen the SPR that was really just a guise to increase the HST. We have seen the education committee, which, again, was supposed to be an all-party committee, and it was put back to the government after two meetings of the all-party committee. Look at the shale gas committee that, again, went back to the government after a considerable amount of work, and the government just had the status quo. Time and time again, we have seen this government have the guise of saying that it wants to work with everybody yet it is up to its decision. We are also in the middle of the climate change committee, which is very, very important, but our concern is that it is just a guise to add a carbon tax to the people of New Brunswick, who are already overtaxed.



Will the Premier tell us this: Is he going to change the rules of the House to allow good debate?

Mr. Speaker: Time. Time, leader.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The comments of the Leader of the Opposition have made it clear what the opposition's issue is, and I will quote what the Leader of the Opposition said to one of the newspapers. He said: "We've had fewer sitting days and we're stuck here in July." We dispute that we have had fewer sitting days. We had 20 sitting days from January 1 to the end of May. We have just added 8 more days. That is 28 days, which really brings us to the average across the country. However, we see in this sentence what the real issue is. It is that the opposition thinks that it is stuck here in July.

For the government, we do not mind working during the summer. We do not mind coming to the Legislature even if it is nice out. Maybe it is warm in here, but we do not mind coming in to pass a free tuition bill that will help those who need it most. We do not mind giving a rebate, the most generous in Atlantic Canada, to low-income and middle-class families. Unfortunately, the opposition does.

Mr. Fitch: Well, again, it is the Premier's agenda that is stuck. It was the Premier's agenda that was stuck. It was the government that could not get its agenda done, so it had to come in with a heavy-handed motion of limited debate and closure. That is how the government members get things done in here. They use their majority to steamroll the opposition. That is what they do.

The Premier is on the record as saying that he was gracious enough to give us another two weeks to debate. The reality, the fact of the matter, is that he would have been happier to jet-set around the country going to various fundraisers and fund runs, putting his agenda above legislative democracy. If the Premier's agenda was so important, why did he back off the bill on the *Judicature Act*? Did he get a call from Ottawa, and did Dominic say to back off that?

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I am not the one who said this. This is printed black on white. It is the Leader of the Opposition saying and complaining to the people of New Brunswick that he is stuck here in July. Those are his words.

For a guy who has been a politician for quite some time, I would think that he would recognize that the people of New Brunswick expect us to work 12 months of the year. You would think that somebody who has been a minister in the former government would understand that, if we are going to move our province forward, grow the economy, create jobs, improve education, and improve health care, we have to work 24-7, 12 months of the year.

For him to have the audacity to lecture us on what we are trying to do for the province to move the province forward and then to complain that he is here in July... I think that he has done a



great disservice to the Conservative Party. I think that he has clearly shown that the priorities of the opposition are out of whack with New Brunswickers.

Mr. Fitch: The only thing that is out of whack is the Premier's perception of reality. We were here in May ready to go to work. We were here in June ready to go work. We are here in July.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fitch: If you do not think that we are ready to go... Lift your motion on closure. Lift your motion on closure, rescind it, and let's go to work. Put your money where your mouth is. Come on, lift the motion. If you do not think that we are ready to work, lift your motion on closure, and let's come back next week and get it done.

Again, if the Premier was so set on getting his agenda done, why, at the expense of the Deputy Premier's reputation, did he withdraw the bill that was so contentious with the judiciary? Did the Premier get a call from Ottawa...

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: No, no, no, do not change the subject. You are ready to work, sure, in May but not in July. They are stuck here in July. He has the audacity to get up on his feet now...

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: They all have the audacity to get up on their feet now and pretend that they want to stay here. They came to us weeks ago saying that, if we pulled the free tuition bill, we would be out of here last Friday. That is when they wanted to leave.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Speaker: The member for Edmundston-Madawaska Centre will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: They did not want to be here "stuck in July", as they said. For us, we are not stuck here in July. We are happy to be here in July to give the largest, most generous rebate to low-income and middle-class families with the HST rebate. We are happy to be here in July to give the Women's Council the independence that it needs. We are happy to be here in July to pass the free tuition bill, giving low-income families and middle-class families hope for the education that they deserve.



Mr. Fitch: Mr. Speaker, please tell the Premier that he does not have to yell to make his point. Many times, he has chastised us here in the Legislature, and, now, he has taken that on himself.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fitch: You talk about cooperation. Yes, we went to the government and said: We want to cooperate because we know that there are things to take care of in the ridings and we know that there was an opportunity to get work done in May and June.

The fact of the matter is that we want to make improvements to the TAB bill. We want to make improvements that this government ignored: choice to students and choice of institutions beyond a limited five. There are 55 private institutions that students cannot choose under the TAB. We want to make improvements. If the Premier wants to work in July, remove the closure motion, and let's get back to work.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The Leader of the Opposition cannot change his words now; what he said yesterday is clear.

[*Original*]

Stuck here in July.

[*Translation*]

I am not the one who said this—the Leader of the Opposition did. He said it to the media, and his words were printed. He is right that I might be getting a bit too excited; yes, it is true. I am excited to see that we are getting approval for a bill that is going to eliminate tuition fees for the students who need it the most in the province.

I am also excited to see that my government will give the most generous rebate among all the Atlantic Provinces to families who need it the most. I am also proud and excited to see that we will make sure the forum to advance the cause of women here, in the province, will be independent from our government. This is not what the previous government did when it was in power.

[*Original*]

I am excited to be here in July to make sure that we continue to advance the province, grow the economy, and make it the best place to live.



Mr. Fitch: Well, I am glad that I excite the Premier so much. If he is so excited about being here in July, why does he not remove the limited debate and closure and come back next week?

The Premier is stuck on a few words. If he is stuck on a few words that I said, why do we not look at a few words that he said? It was 5 000 jobs in the first mandate. Sorry, sorry. It was 5 000 jobs in the first year and 10 000 jobs in the first mandate. That is what the Premier said. I offered him to have a do-over because the outlook of the council was for 1 600 jobs. Now, all of a sudden, there is a whole new light for the Premier.

When he talks about... What he says and what he does are two different things. Now, he is saying that he wants to work in July. We want to cooperate too. We have made that obvious. If that is the case, have the Premier pull the closure motion, and let's get back to work next week.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I think that the people of New Brunswick see right through the stunts of the opposition. On the Friday on which we on the government side have agreed to pass the bills that will improve the quality of life of New Brunswickers... We did so by taking away some bills so that we could make sure that the opposition members felt that they had enough time to debate these important bills that we are going to pass today. They have the audacity to get up on the last day and say: Oh, yeah, we want to stay here longer.

However, their actions and words say more than that. They say the truth. The truth is that the members opposite feel that they are stuck here in July. The Leader of the Opposition said that yesterday—that they are stuck here in July. Their actions, asking us to pull the free tuition bill so that we could be out of here by the last Friday, speak louder than words. Now, they are trying to pretend that it was to improve the bill. No, they did not want the free tuition bill to be enacted for this September. Well, I can guarantee to the people of New Brunswick that we are passing it today. Those who need the most support will have the free tuition bill to back them up.

Mr. Fitch: Again, we see the Premier being very selective in his choice of words here today when he says that we agreed to pass the bills. They brought in a closure motion. They brought in a limited debate and a closure motion. It is in Hansard. It is on the tape. The Premier cannot deny it. It is in the paper. It is in the media. The Premier stands up and says: Oh, it is all the opposition's fault. We came to you wanting to cooperate. We came to you to help. What happened? We were routinely rejected.

We went with a number of ways to improve the TAB bill. Talking about the \$25 million that the government members took out... They took out \$50 million and put some in. There is still a huge amount of money that they have taken away from Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. We are going to make some amendments here today that will improve the TAB. I am asking the members opposite this: If they want to make that bill better, then why do they not vote for the amendments that we are going to bring in to include private universities and to have a sliding scale?



Hon. Mr. Gallant: One day, the Leader of the Opposition will no longer be a politician. He will read Hansard, watch the videos of his speeches, and see the discrepancies. At the beginning, he is talking about us. He is accusing us of not cooperating enough. He is pretending now, on the last day of the Legislature, that the opposition members want to stay longer. He is now bringing in amendments to an important bill, on the last day of the Legislature. He never told us about them, of course.

The opposition is saying that things are in Hansard and on video. Well, guess what. “We are stuck here in July” is also now captured forevermore. The truth came out yesterday. I get it. The Leader of the Opposition is tired. He has been doing question period.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: He has been in the Legislature. It is hot in here. It is summertime. I get it. In a slip of the tongue, he told the truth. He said that the members opposite feel that they are stuck here in July. Well, that demonstrates that everything else that they have been doing has been trying to score political points. However, do not worry. We want to be here in July to pass the free tuition bill.

Job Creation

Mr. Fitch: One day soon, the member across the way will not be the Premier. For some people, that cannot come quickly enough.

We have seen a government that has promised jobs—5 000 in the first year and 10 000 in the mandate. We have seen that. That is on tape. That is in Hansard. The Premier will look at that and say: Why did I make that foolish, rash, and brash promise? It was to get elected.

Now, the reality of the day is setting in. The unemployment rate here in New Brunswick is above 10% now. It is 10.3%, based on the things and the decisions that this government has made that have driven jobs, the economy, and investment out of New Brunswick. We can look at a number of things: higher taxes and the HST. The HST is a job killer. Will the Premier go to work and reduce the high unemployment here in the province?

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time.



[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: It is unfortunate to see that, clearly, the Leader of the Opposition wants to focus on negative things. Is the unemployment rate too high in the province? Absolutely, and we will work very hard, day after day, to try to help those who are looking for a job.

That being said, the number of jobs in the province has increased over the last month, which is positive. It is unfortunate to see that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to focus on this good news. The Leader of the Opposition seems to want to talk about the number of jobs created by our government. I apologize, since I will probably need two or three answers to list all the jobs that were created.

[Original]

We had Clean Harbors Energy and Industrial Services in Saint John with 15 jobs created; Advanced Heli Core in Dieppe, 30 jobs; Trevali Mining in Bathurst, 89 jobs; Vilco Limited in Saint John, 40 jobs...

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Ocean Group in Bas-Caraquet, 75 jobs; Co-Operators General Insurance Company, 70 jobs in Moncton; 130 jobs with Nordia; 80 jobs with Air Canada in Saint John; 1 000 jobs at BMM Testlabs in Moncton...

Mr. Speaker: Time, Premier.

Indigenous Languages

Mr. Coon: While this is great sport with a high entertainment value this morning, I have some questions.

Last month, Prime Minister Trudeau spoke at a virtual town hall on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. He was talking about the importance of protecting indigenous languages, some of which are extremely endangered. He described indigenous languages—any language—as an indicator of pride in identity, belonging, and culture.

The Wolastoqey language is among the most endangered in the country. Immediate action must be taken to preserve this language of the Maliseet since most of those who speak it fluently are well over 60 years old. Will the Premier of the province take leadership on this issue to ensure that the Wolastoqiyik do not lose their language forever?



Hon. Mr. Doherty: We have worked very closely with both the Mi'kmaq and the Maliseet, the Wolastoqiyik, First Nations on developing programs to preserve their language and their culture. As a matter of fact, there are some wonderful innovative ideas in terms of developing games so that the children of these two wonderful First Nations can develop interactive opportunities to learn the language. As all of us know very, very well, once the language is lost, your culture is lost. I am very, very happy with the relationship that we have with our First Nations communities in terms of our discussions, attending powwows, and attending national meetings. The preservation of the language of the Wolastoqiyik people is paramount on our agenda.

Mr. Coon: The Wolastoqiyik people are on the verge of losing their language. A proposal was submitted to this government several months ago, on behalf of the chiefs of the communities, calling for an emergency project to establish an immersion program at the preschool level. The intention was that it would be ready to implement this fall. Unfortunately, nothing has come to fruition yet, meaning that another year will come and go and the Wolastoqiyik elders fluent in their own tongue will turn another year older. Will the Premier intervene to see that this project is fast-tracked so that the Wolastoqiyik preschoolers will begin learning in their own language this fall?

Hon. Mr. Kenny: As the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, I am honoured to stand here today and say that we are moving forward with the preservation of language with Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqey language development. I want to inform the House that we have introductory and intermediate language courses in Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqey that have been developed. In-person and online introductory courses have also been implemented. Also, the intermediate in-person course will be implemented in the near future. Also, online intermediate courses will be implemented in 2017. We are making some strides in this. We want to make sure that we do the best thing for our people in New Brunswick. Thank you.

Mr. Coon: Toddlers and preschoolers cannot go online and learn a language that way. New Brunswick has been seen, for many, as a leader in language rights due to our constitutional protection of both official languages. More than any other province, we understand and value the intimate connection between language and culture. David Leitch, a Toronto-based lawyer, is preparing a constitutional challenge that argues that Aboriginal people have a right to be taught in their own language. Let's not wait for the courts to mandate policy on this. We have the opportunity now to assert ourselves as the leaders of linguistic rights in this country. Will the Premier establish a working group now to outline a plan of action that will restore and revitalize indigenous languages in our province?

Hon. Mr. Kenny: As I said earlier in my answer to the previous question, our department takes great pride in being able to work with our First Nations communities. As I said, with the online courses and working with the officials at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, we are working with our First Nations communities to make sure that we can help these communities preserve their language. I also want to say that we have made record investments in education throughout the whole province.



We are working with our First Nations communities along with the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs. We have very good relationships throughout the province. I want to inform the member opposite that we are making some headway on this, and we want to continue to help make sure we preserve those languages. Thank you.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr. Fitch: I know that time is running out in question period, but some of the comments the Premier made need to be corrected. When he talks about creating jobs in New Brunswick, he needs to balance that with the jobs he has forced out of New Brunswick.

We were in Sussex not too long ago when a group of people from businesses including Stephen Moffett Ltd., Alantra, and Amsterdam Inn were talking about how their businesses have suffered because of the moratorium on shale gas in the province. The businesses came with a solution that would address that. There was even a solution to the wastewater issues. The companies down there are able to solve the problem of wastewater, but this government sits on its thumbs and does nothing with regard to that. Why is the Premier driving jobs out and not taking advice such as a regional moratorium on shale gas in New Brunswick?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: You would think that the member opposite, when he was in government, would have taken the time to understand the process fully. It is not about treatment. It is also about disposal.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I do not know. Again, I have asked this question in the Legislature, and I have never received an answer. Does that mean that the Leader of the Opposition is saying that Riverview is ready to take the disposal water?

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I think it is very important to take the time to point out that I will not have enough time today to go through the more than 1 000 jobs that have been signed with ONB over the past few months.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Look, the Canadian economy is not going as well as we all would like.



(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: The member for Carleton will come to order. I am right here.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: However, we had a 1.9% increase in our economy, which is the largest since 2010. In New Brunswick, since June of last year, we have had an extra 1 000 jobs, a net gain of 1 000 jobs. In the past month, we have had a net gain of 1 200 jobs. The people of New Brunswick, the entrepreneurs and the businesses, believe in our province. They are working hard, and they are making it happen, growing our economy and creating opportunities for all.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Dubé: Today is the last sitting day of the House for this session. Given that we still have a lot of questions to ask and time is limited, I am asking you to consider extending question period today.

[*Original*]

Mr. Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is no agreement.

