

**November 7, 2017**

[Original]

### Health Care Services

**Mr. Higgs:** The Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents writes: The Association francophone des aînés du Nouveau-Brunswick was told that it was not allowed to hold a public meeting today at the CCNB campus in Dieppe.

Since then, there has been an apology issued but too late for the meeting to proceed. Has the Premier made any inquiries regarding how this happened? Is the Premier aware of any contact from his government to CCNB Dieppe with regard to it canceling this meeting? Thank you.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Melanson:** Let's be clear: There has been no political interference in this decision by the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick. I would even say it is unfortunate that this decision was made, but I am glad to see that the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick issued a press release to apologize.

Our government and I encourage any New Brunswickers who have concerns or want to discuss different issues to do so in a public forum and even within a public institution.

Therefore, I want to clarify this: There was no political interference on the part of the New Brunswick government concerning this decision, and I encourage these groups to keep voicing their opinions on the subject, because constructive debate moves files forward.

[Original]

**Mr. Higgs:** Conflicts of interest, or perceived conflicts of interest, have been a big topic over the last several weeks. I asked whether the Gallant government had had any contact with CCNB Dieppe for a reason. Does the Premier know that his Associate Deputy Minister of Health Services and Francophone Affairs was most recently the director of the CCNB campus in Dieppe?

**Hon. Mr. Melanson:** I just want to make sure that everyone in this Legislature and certainly around the province understands that there has been absolutely no political interference. We did not get involved. We did not even discuss this with CCNB. It was a decision that was made by CCNB. My understanding is that CCNB just put out a public press release and apologized. It was a misinterpretation of the college's own policies.



Actually, we encourage New Brunswickers to debate issues and to make sure that, when debates are ongoing, it can be done in a public forum. I think it is important that we clarify. I am quite pleased to rise today to clarify that there was absolutely no political interference in this decision. It was a CCNB decision.

**Mr. Higgs:** The Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents' Rights and the Association francophone des aînés du Nouveau-Brunswick were going to hold a meeting today regarding this government's plans to privatize extra-mural and other health care delivery in the province—in other words, to bring American-style health care to New Brunswick. These meetings are being held all around the province. Other meetings are scheduled for November 9 at the Shediac Multipurpose Centre at 6:30 p.m. and for November 10 at the Club du bel âge de Caraquet at 6:30 p.m. This government cannot shut them all down. Besides the two meetings I mentioned, there are another eight scheduled for between now and November 27.

Will the Premier make the contract that his government signed with Medavie public? What has the government signed anyway? New Brunswick wants to know, and now, the meetings are being closed down. It is time that the details were brought out and the contract was made public so that we can see just what kind of deal has been given to Medavie. Thank you.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** It is very unfortunate to hear the accusations being made by the opposition. First of all, we understand how important our health care system is to New Brunswickers.

*[Original]*

We understand that New Brunswickers want to ensure that health care will be of high quality and will be accessible to all New Brunswickers. We work very hard with our partners, and we work very hard with the people of New Brunswick to ensure that we will be able to deliver just that.

I can tell you that we want to ensure that we are innovating as well, giving our seniors the best care possible—the care that they deserve. That is why we are innovating in the way we deliver extra-mural services. That is why we will be investing millions of dollars in home care over the next few years. That is why we are going to ensure that there are nursing homes around the province that have the capacity for seniors who need that type of care. We are going to ensure that people have strong health care and that we treat our seniors with dignity in this province.

**Mr. Higgs:** We hear this on a continuous basis: We are spending record amounts of your tax dollars. We are throwing money at this, and we are throwing money at that. We have a plan here with Medavie, and we have no idea what the results are going to be. Those will come later. We have just handed over a contract with no real commitment on results. We have given away health care, and we are privatizing our extra-mural health care services.



New Brunswickers are reaching out to the opposition with their questions and concerns regarding the 10-year, \$2-billion sole-sourced contract with Medavie. People have been conditioned to question the actions of this government after watching for three years the outright patronage and favoritism that have become policy. We are asked: What exit clause, if any, exists in this contract? Has this government given out an untendered 10-year monopoly? This is why it is so important for this Premier to make the contract public. Is the Premier prepared to be open and transparent on this file, or will he just continue to talk about it?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Once again, it is unfortunate to hear what the opposition is telling us.

[*Original*]

We are investing in New Brunswickers' priorities. We are not throwing money around, as the Leader of the Opposition wants to insinuate. I do not know why he got up this morning and thought he should be fearmongering. I do not think investing record amounts in education is a waste of money. It is very much the opposite. It is the way that we are going to ensure that we have a strong economy for many years to come, and it is the way that we are going to ensure that we give every individual, family, and community the chance to succeed in our province.

We are investing in early intervention for children who would have learning disabilities or learning challenges so that we can identify them as early as possible and support them. We are investing in literacy to increase our rates, investing in coding, putting trades back in our schools, and making sure university and college education is accessible and affordable. We are proud to be investing the most in education in the history of our province, and we are doing it strategically as well.

### **Government Policy and Procedure**

**Mr. Higgs:** Yes, the government is indeed proud of taxing the people the most in the history of this province and throwing the most money at whatever it can to buy the next election. To invest is to get results, and there are not any results defined in anything that this government is doing. It is just about: I am investing more, I am spending more, and I will tax you more.

The Premier allowed the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie to remain in Cabinet for two weeks after a dinner meeting on August 21. An alleged letter was presented on August 22. The Premier should explain why he did this. Is it the Premier's judgment that it is fine for one of his Cabinet ministers to be a lobbyist?

This is all about the Premier. He publicly supported the former Health Minister remaining in his position while a conflict raged on over Parlee Beach. He enabled Len Hoyt to negotiate for Enbridge while he was also working for the Strategic Program Review. It appears as though we



have a Premier who does not know what conflict is or does not care. Will the Premier get up and tell the House why these three examples I have given are acceptable to him?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** With regard to the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie, we have taken concrete steps to ensure transparency and accountability within government. It is important that New Brunswickers see that their government is transparent and accountable to them. That being said, transparency and accountability are also important because they lead to better decisions that advance the priorities of New Brunswickers.

[*Original*]

I have to take issue with what the Leader of the Opposition said. We are working very hard with the people of New Brunswick, with entrepreneurs, with businesses, and with community leaders to ensure that we grow the economy in a way that works for everyone. I know that the Leader of the Opposition does not agree with what we have done. I know that he does not agree with our taxing the 1% richest so that we can invest more in education and health care. Raising taxes on large businesses—he does not agree. Raising the minimum wage three times—he does not agree. Free tuition for those who need it the most—he does not agree. CPP enhancements for our seniors—he does not agree. Living SJ to reduce generational poverty in the city of Saint John—he does not even agree with that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

**Mr. Higgs:** Once again, talk is cheap. That is the only thing that is cheap about this government—talk. Everywhere else, the money is flowing. The results are not flowing, but the money is flowing. The money is directly from every taxpaying citizen in this province.

The Premier could and should provide the public with an original electronic copy of this letter to the former Labour Minister. This should have been done last week. All he has to do is to contact his office and have the original file sent to the members of the press gallery. I am sure that we have the ability to verify its authenticity here in this city. It will not address the Premier's judgment, nor will it address the legality of negotiating with a labour union for a job while in the position of Labour Minister. However, it will at least address the letter. Will the Premier agree to do this and make this public? Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Actually, when it comes to the letter I wrote to the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie, we shared the documentation with the media to show the series of measures we



took in this file. Therefore, the Leader of the Opposition can certainly get a copy from the media.

[*Original*]

I have to take issue again with what the Leader of the Opposition is saying. He is saying that we are throwing money away. That is not what we are doing. We are investing in the priorities of the people of our province. We have reduced the deficit by more than half, all the while growing the economy every single year, working with the people of our province, and investing more in education and investing more in health care. From 2011 to 2014, when the Leader of the Opposition was cutting into education and health care, the economy retracted. Since we have been the government and have been investing in the people of our province, the economy grew in 2015 and again in 2016 and it is estimated to grow yet again in 2017. And, in 2016, wages went up at the fastest rate in the country right here in New Brunswick.

**Mr. Higgs:** Mirror, mirror, on the wall. When did the Premier first learn that the former Labour Minister was considering another line of work? What led to the dinner meeting with the former Labour Minister? Had the Premier been advised prior to the dinner meeting that there was some activity involving the former Labour Minister? Will the Premier advise the House today as to when he actually first learned that the former Labour Minister was negotiating for another job? Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I have already answered these questions. I clearly said that, when I had dinner with the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie, we talked about whether he would run again in the next election. He told me he had made his decision and would not run again in 2018.

Then, I told the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie that I thought it was important to have other people in Cabinet and that I was going to ask him to no longer serve as minister. At that point, he let me know that he might eventually consider other jobs. This happened on August 21, as I have already mentioned. That same evening, we started drafting a letter, which was sent. The minister who is currently responsible for the Regional Development Corporation, among other duties, was then handed responsibility for labour. Two weeks after this dinner, there was a Cabinet shuffle, so the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie was no longer in Cabinet. We will continue to be accountable and transparent toward New Brunswickers.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, Premier.



**Mr. Higgs:** There is a lot of talk about the August 21 and August 22 dates, but this question is very simple: When did the Premier first learn that his Minister of Labour was negotiating for another job with a labour union? Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I do not want the Leader of the Opposition to try to put words in my mouth. I mentioned several times, and again today, what was said at our dinner on August 21. Afterward, there was a Cabinet shuffle, and, when the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie began talks with the group for which he will now be working, he was no longer in Cabinet. I do not know; these are questions the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie should answer.

Here is what I can tell you: When I found out there was a possibility that the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie was considering another job, I took concrete steps to make sure our government was accountable and transparent toward New Brunswickers. Since the subsequent shuffle, the member is no longer in Cabinet. We also took other concrete steps to ensure the member made a choice between his functions in the House or the job...

[*Original*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, Premier.

**Mr. Higgs:** We talk around the answers, and we talk about the meeting on August 21. The supper was acknowledged, but what is not acknowledged is whether this was the first time that the Premier actually knew that the Minister of Labour was negotiating for another job. They talk about changing jobs, but the Minister of Labour had no plans for changing jobs. He was going to do both, after all.

After allegedly writing the letter on August 22, the Premier allowed the former Labour Minister to stay in his position as Cabinet member for two weeks. There are many more unanswered questions: When did the Premier's Office first become aware? When did the Labour Minister first start his negotiation with the union? I have tried to get answers to those questions. Did he use taxpayer-funded travel to further his own interests? Did he expense food and lodging while negotiating for a job? How do the people learn the answers to these questions in such a way that they can have faith in the answers and belief in the system?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Again, we have answered the questions, and we have taken concrete steps. This was not at all easy for the government caucus, and I am sure it was not at all easy for the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie either. However, at the end of the day, by taking concrete steps, showing leadership, and making decisions, we have made sure we are transparent and accountable to New Brunswickers.





[Original]

I cannot say the same for the Leader of the Opposition. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to get on his high horse today and talk about transparency and responding to questions, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to finally clarify whether he supported and promoted the Canaport LNG tax break that the terminal received in 2005.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** He said in this Legislature that he never did, yet we have proof that he indeed supported and promoted the LNG tax break.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Will he come clean to the people of New Brunswick that he supported and promoted this tax deal?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, Premier.

**Mr. Flemming:** I have been sitting here listening carefully to the questions, and I have been listening carefully to the answers. What strikes me is that the Leader of the Opposition is asking very, very simple questions but he is not getting simple answers. He is getting answers about transparency, meetings, and doing the right thing, but he is not getting a specific answer.

Therefore, I am going to ask it myself really simply. It is concerning the worst-kept secret in Fredericton, which I knew about in June, that the Minister of Labour was getting a labour job. When did the Premier first learn that the Minister of Labour was negotiating for a labour job? Simple. When did he first learn it?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** I think the Premier has been very clear and has taken his responsibilities very seriously; as always, he has shown leadership.

We all know that, last August 21, the Premier had an evening meal with the then Minister of Labour. As soon as the Premier found out there was a possibility that the minister might accept a new labour job, he immediately told him that this portfolio would be taken away from him. Moreover, the media was given proof that, the same evening, a letter was drafted to make sure a new minister would be assigned responsibility for labour.



I am also asking the Leader of the Opposition what he did to promote the deal involving Canaport LNG.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

**Mr. Flemming:** Is it not interesting that I still do not get a simple answer to a simple question? Therefore, I am going to rephrase my simple question. Hopefully, I will get a simple answer. Was the Premier aware before August 21 or 22 that there were some discussions with his then Minister of Labour to take a job in the labour industry? When did he know?

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** I guess that I will say this in English. As I said in French . . .

[*Translation*]

As soon as the Premier learned...

[*Original*]

As soon as he learned, on August 21, he acted immediately.

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, we cannot say as much about the Leader of the Opposition. You know, we have been asking him for weeks exactly what role he played in promoting the tax deal involving Canaport LNG.

[*Original*]

The Canaport LNG tax deal, I should say.

[*Translation*]

After two weeks of questions, and after the Leader of the Opposition stated in the House, in his reply to the speech from the throne, that he had not been very involved in this file, there is proof to the contrary. Therefore, when will the Leader of the Opposition finally say exactly what his involvement was in this file? What role did he play in this famous Canaport LNG deal?

[*Original*]

**Mr. Flemming:** I know that props are not appropriate in the Legislature, but I feel like getting a dirty beige trench coat and a half-smoked cigar because I feel like Lieutenant Columbo.





(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Flemming:** There is just something here that is not adding up. There is just something that does not seem to fit. I am going to ask another one of these questions, without the cigar and without the raincoat.

I would like to know when the Clerk of the Executive Council, Ms. Wagner, and the Deputy Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Mr. Dupuis, received their letters dated August 22. I know these people. They will say nothing, or they will tell the truth. However, I know that they will not lie.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** Now we have Columbo in the House with us.

I think I have been very clear. On August 21, as soon as the Premier found out what was happening, he took action. I can tell you that I personally witnessed an exchange of emails in which Deputy Minister Dupuis indeed offered his services to the new minister responsible for labour. This exchange took place as early as August. So, Columbo can sit down and rest. We are indeed sure that the deputy minister was actually informed.

That being said, we are still waiting for the answer from the Leader of the Opposition, a person who gets on his high horse and talks about lofty principles. We are asking a very simple question: Will he finally tell the House exactly what his involvement was in the Canaport LNG deal?

## Health Care Services

**Mr. Coon:** During question period on October 27, I mentioned many organizations that are opposed to the privatization of the management of health care services provided by the Extra-Mural Program, and I asked the Minister of Health if he could name one person who agreed with this decision.

The minister said that the Nurses Association of New Brunswick agreed. However, in a letter dated October 26 and addressed to the Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents' Rights, Karen Frenette, the president of the association, wrote that the group had not yet taken position on the privatization of health services. Will the minister admit his mistake in this regard and set the record straight?

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** I thank the member for his question. What I can tell you is that, when the partnership with Medavie was announced on September 1 or the following day, the president of the Nurses Association of New Brunswick was in attendance and supported it.



Representatives from the New Brunswick Medical Society were also there. The leader of the third party can check, and he will see that was clearly the case.

What I can also tell you is that we are working hard and with conviction. Unlike what certain people may imply, we are talking here about strengthening the health care system and making it more accessible for New Brunswick patients. This is being done because, on our side of the House, the quality of care provided to each patient in New Brunswick takes precedence over everything else. That is what we will continue to do. We are confident that this partnership will help us meet this objective and that people will get better health care.

[Original]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

**Mr. Coon:** The Minister of Health also told this House that the Horizon Health Network is in favour of handing the management of extra-mural health services to Medavie. I cannot find a shred of evidence to back up this claim. In a letter dated September 28, 2017, to the Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents' Rights, Horizon President and CEO Karen McGrath wrote: "The decision to transfer the Extra Mural Program of Horizon Health Network to Medavie Blue Cross was a Government of New Brunswick decision that we were advised of and directed to implement. The Board of Horizon does not have a position on this matter." Can the minister tell this House why he does not have faith in our regional health authorities to manage public health services?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Health care is important to every single New Brunswick family. It is important to our communities.

[Translation]

We understand that it is important to make sure the province has a high-quality health system that is accessible to all New Brunswick families. Therefore, as a government, that is what we are doing.

[Original]

I have to take issue with all the members of the opposition and the leader of the third party. We want to work with the health authorities to deliver the best health care possible. Yes, we will not always agree. When it suits them, the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition say that we should follow the health authorities, and when it does not suit them, they say that we should not follow. Now, we have the member of the third party doing the same thing.

Do you know what we are going to follow? We are going to follow what the people of New Brunswick deserve when it comes to health care. The former CEO of Horizon suggested that we close down rural hospitals.



[Translation]

We took action when Vitalité Health Network suggested eliminating chemotherapy treatment in the northern part of the province.

[Original]

We stood up to them, and we stood up for the people of our province.

**Mr. Coon:** Égalité santé en français has launched a judicial review of the decision of the Minister of Health to privatize the management of our extra-mural health services, asserting that the minister lacks the power to make such a decision under the *Regional Health Authorities Act*. The Vitalité Health Network opposes its removal from the management of these vital health services. Every seniors organization in the province wants our regional health authorities to continue to manage extra-mural health services.

Will the minister abandon his folly and restore the authority of the regional health authorities to manage our health services?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** We cannot comment on the floor of the Legislature or in public on a case that is before the courts. What we can do, though, is repeat the answer that I just gave.

We are not going to blindly sit there and let the health authorities make decisions that we do not agree with when it could have an impact on rural New Brunswick and an impact on families in our province. We want to work with them, but we did not agree. We made no secret of the fact that we did not agree with the musings of the former CEO of Horizon about closing down rural hospitals. We made no secret of not agreeing with Vitalité's recent decision to close chemotherapy in Grand Falls and Saint-Quentin.

No, we will not blindly let the health authorities do things that we think are not in the best interest of our province and that we believe go against the guidelines and the agenda that we have put forward for health care. We are going to continue to invest in our families and invest in health care, and we are going to make sure that it is high-quality and accessible for all.

**Mr. B. Macdonald:** It is pretty rich for the Premier to get up here and claim that he is standing up to Vitalité because, from the very beginning, the Premier has directed the actions of Vitalité. He began by firing the CEO, and then he forced the privatization of cleaning services down its throat and the privatization of food services down its throat. Now, he is trying to force the privatization of the Extra-Mural Program. None of these were wanted by Vitalité, but this Premier had no trouble telling it exactly what he wanted it to do.

My question is this: The Premier has an opportunity now. The deal with Medavie has not been signed. Why does this Premier not assure the people of New Brunswick that the contract with



Medavie, worth \$2 billion for 10 years, will be competed openly and transparently and ensure that New Brunswickers are getting the best value?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** It comes as no surprise to us to hear the opposition say that we should have been following Vitalité recently and that we should be following, I am sure, the former CEO of Horizon. The opposition would love for us to close down rural hospitals. We stood up against the latest decision of Vitalité to take away chemotherapy treatment in Grand Falls and Saint-Quentin. We stood up when the former CEO of Horizon said that we should be closing down rural hospitals, many of which, by the way, are in communities that are represented by the opposition.

We stood up, but the Leader of the Opposition and, obviously, the members of the opposition think that this is okay. They want us to let them do that, and I know why. I quote the Leader of the Opposition: “I do not deny that we have too many schools and that we have schools in rural areas that are the only things left in those areas . . . I do not deny that we have too many hospitals. I realize that we can be much better if we consolidate.”

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** That was in 2015. Luckily, we do not agree.

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

