

November 9, 2017

[Original]

Health Care Services

Mr. Higgs: We have seen gatherings around the province in record numbers in relation to extra-mural services being privatized—privatized and handed to Medavie, handed over in an untendered process, without a contract. I have asked this several times this week, and I want to ask the Premier this again because I am hopeful that it is not too late: Has the contract been signed with Medavie? Can we reverse this decision? Can we get the details of this? I am asking the Premier a very simple question. Has this contract with Medavie been signed at this point? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The Minister of Health has answered that question already, and he has already answered that question with the media. What we see here, unfortunately, from the Leader of the Opposition is fearmongering. He wonders why there are questions with regard to the Extra-Mural Program. It is because he is sitting here saying that it is going to be privatized when he knows that is not the case. It is going to be publicly funded. It will be managed by a nonprofit organization.

We are doing this because we need to innovate to deliver better health care that is as high-quality as possible and as accessible as possible to all New Brunswickers and their families. That is what our government has been focused on when it comes to health care. That is what our government will continue to be focused on moving forward. I would appreciate it if the Leader of the Opposition would stop trying to fearmonger and get on board with innovating and ensuring that we deliver the best health care possible to all New Brunswickers of our province.

Mr. Higgs: I am sure that I did not miss it, but I did not hear a yes or no there. I heard a deferral to the Minister of Health. Given that the Premier will not answer as to whether the contract has been signed or not signed... I find it very ironic that he continues to refuse to answer a very simple question here in the people's House. It is another clear indication of the contempt that the Premier has for our democratic institutions and for the people of New Brunswick.

Since there is no point in asking the Premier any more questions on Medavie, perhaps the Minister of Health would commit to making the proposed Medavie contract public. However, first, I would like to ask the Minister of Health whether the contract is signed or not signed at this point. Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The Leader of the Opposition is well aware—if he is not, he should read the newspaper—that the Minister of Health answered these questions yesterday. The minister said that we will indeed be as transparent as possible with regard to this file, because it is important for people to see and know what is going on with this project.



Again, I am asking the Leader of the Opposition to stop trying to scare people and say what this project actually involves. This project will lead to an increase in the number of home care visits. The program will still be publicly funded, meaning by the government. With this project, we are talking about management only, which will be done by a nonprofit organization. So, we are talking about a project that will enable us to innovate and to help provide high-quality health care to all New Brunswickers.

[Original]

Mr. Higgs: The Premier continues to refuse to answer, but I think that is probably as close as we will get—that he agrees that the Minister of Health said that it was not signed. Given that that is an admission that the contract is not signed—that being the case—and given the fact that we do not have any details around any performance of any kind associated with this sole-sourced handing of an \$80-million contract to Medavie, I would ask this question: Can that contract that is now being considered to be signed be made public so that we can understand just what the value is in it for New Brunswickers?

We know the value of extra-mural services in this province, but we do not know the value of handing out an untendered contract, privatizing health care, and giving it to a private company. That is what we want answered. So, will the Premier make the contract public? Will the Premier define what the real benefits are for the province? Rather than just words, let's have details.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Yet again, I would like to correct the Leader of the Opposition. We are talking about continuing to publicly fund the Extra-Mural Program, and we are talking about having the management of the Extra-Mural Program done by a nonprofit organization. These are very important facts that I think the Leader of the Opposition should allude to when he is asking questions about this file. When it comes to the questions that he has been asking this morning, they have been answered. They are in the media. The media have shown New Brunswickers how we are going to ensure that we are as transparent as possible by having the Minister of Health quoted and answering those questions.

I want to say yet again that the fearmongering from the Leader of the Opposition literally has people across this province thinking that extra-mural services will actually be cut under this program, which is completely not the case. We are going to publicly fund the Extra-Mural Program. We are going to ensure that it is of high quality and accessible to all New Brunswickers, and we will increase visitations while we are doing it.

Mr. Higgs: The people across this province have good reason to be concerned. We have consistently heard part of the story in any sort of response, so I do need to go back to the original question and basically say: Does the Premier agree with the Minister of Health that the contract is not signed at this point? Can we just have an acknowledgment that the Minister of Health is correct and that the contract is not signed at this point? Will the Premier answer that very simple question? It is not a whole lot of words: Is it signed, or is it not signed? Thank you.



[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition is admitting that the Minister of Health answered the question. I do not know how much time I have left to answer the question; 73 seconds, maybe.

I want to make sure I am making this very clear for the opposition: As a government, our top priority is providing high-quality health care that is accessible for all New Brunswickers. That is more than we can say about the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, when he was on the government side, he made cuts in our health care system. Since he has been in opposition, he has been saying that, in his opinion, there are too many hospitals. So, one thing is obvious: If he were to become Premier, he would make cuts in our health care system. Fortunately, we will not do that; on the contrary, we will invest more and increase the quality and accessibility of our health care.

[Original]

Mr. Higgs: I am sure that anyone listening to this response is wondering why the Premier will not answer a simple question. There must be some reason. Is this another case where it is going to be reactive: Well, it is going to keep going, and I cannot do anything about it? Is it going to be like so many other projects, or does the Premier have an opportunity here? I will ask again: Does he agree with the Minister of Health that the contract is indeed not signed at this point in time? Only the Premier has the opportunity to make this right. If the contract is not signed, he has that opportunity. Once again, can the Premier say yes or no? Is he agreeing with the Minister of Health? Is the contract signed, or is it not signed at this point in time? Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Bourque: Thank you for the repetitive question. It reminds me of the little ditty about Pete and Repeat in a boat, from when I was in kindergarten.

It is true that we have a problem concerning literacy in the province, but I thought the Leader of the Opposition could read. I know he can get an English translation of what I clearly said this morning in *Acadie Nouvelle*. All the answers are there, and they are clear.

One more thing: On our side of the House, we are listening to people.

[Original]

We are listening to the people. I am not sure we can say the same for the Leader of the Opposition. A few weeks back, he was at an information session we had in Saint John where we explained in front of him all the key performance indicators that we had. He was asking about the results. We explained it clearly. He was there. Why is he asking questions now? It beats me. Why not ask him: Why is he asking those questions? We answered them.



Mr. Higgs: Singing has become a trademark of this government but not answering questions has also become a trademark. Not answering questions has been symbolic and continuous right from the start—not answering a simple question. Even the Minister of Health did not confirm what he had said in an article because he is upset that he said it, and probably the Premier is upset that he said it. Is it true? Is it signed or not signed? That is what we want to get at. All I am asking for is the truth—a very simple answer.

I will go back to the Premier. Is the contract with Medavie for the transfer of extra-mural services signed or not signed at this point in time? Is that contract now cast in ink or is it not? Only the Premier could answer this, but he is refusing—steadily refusing—to answer yes or no. That says a whole lot, does it not? He is not taking responsibility or accountability. Is it signed? Yes or no, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I think that everybody watching who had the chance to see what was said yesterday knows the answer, so we will just continue to say that we have answered the question and allow the Leader of the Opposition to waste question period by sitting there and asking a question that he already knows the answers to.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: The member for Fredericton West-Hanwell will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: What I can tell you is that we do not share the view of the Leader of the Opposition on how we have to deliver health care in this province. We believe that we have to increase accessibility. We have to have a high-quality health care system for all New Brunswickers. We have to do this because we understand the importance that health care has for the people of our province.

The Leader of the Opposition does not agree with all of that, and I want to quote him. On December 12, 2015, he said: “I do not deny that we have too many hospitals. I realize that we can be much better if we consolidate.” Those were his words not even two years ago. We do not agree with him. We are going to invest more in health care to make sure that it is accessible and that it is high-quality for all New Brunswickers.

Mr. Higgs: I could use a tape. All I want to know is this: Is the contract signed? Yes or no? I also want to hear the Premier say it, to be clear and accountable to the citizens of this province. Is the contract signed? Yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: The answer is still the same one that the Minister of Health provided yesterday, but I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition has repeated his question for the 73rd time.

I can tell you that we are proposing this project because we want to deliver the best possible health care to New Brunswickers, and that includes home care. It is very important to emphasize that this project will enable us to ensure these services are publicly funded, meaning



by the government, but the management will be done by a nonprofit organization. So, the objective of this organization is not to make a profit. This will enable us to increase the number of home care visits.

Innovation and improvement of our health care system must be done. We must do this in order to have a high-quality health care system that is accessible to all New Brunswickers.

[Original]

Mr. Higgs: I have asked the question to be answered. I have asked for confirmation of whether it is signed or not signed. I cannot be any clearer than that. Before we can move on... I know that the Premier hopes that I will move on to something else, but I am not moving on until I get an answer. I want to know, and I want a confirmation from the Premier. Is the contract signed or not signed with Medavie at this point in time? That is all I am asking, and I am going to stick to it until I get an answer. Yes or no? He can deflect. He can move around. He can talk about every other thing, but I want an answer. Yes or no? Simple. Then I will move on.

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I am going to repeat once more that the minister answered this question yesterday. If the Leader of the Opposition is so determined to have people answer questions, like the Minister of Health did yesterday in front of the media, I would ask him to answer the ones we have asked him about 73 times.

[Original]

We have asked the Leader of the Opposition to clarify something for us. We were under the impression that he supported and promoted the LNG tax break that the terminal got in 2005. He then said in the throne speech reply that he did not support and promote the LNG tax deal, but we then found evidence to the contrary, very clearly having the Leader of the Opposition, about 10 years ago now, supporting and promoting the LNG tax break that was given to the terminal. Therefore, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to answer the question: Which one is it?

Mr. Higgs: In the last session, I think that I asked 113 questions without one single answer. In this session, we have not asked 113 yet, but I could relate the same score. We are over 20 questions or whatever the number.

Considering the audience here today and the athletes who are here, I know how important it is to win medals based on a time or a distance, a real measurable outcome that defines success or not. However, you cannot define success if you do not get straight answers to real questions.

A very real question is the Premier's acknowledgment of whether the deal with Medavie is signed or not signed. It is not difficult. It is yes or no. He does not need to defer. This is a very simple question. I want confirmation from the Premier. I want an answer from the Premier. Is the contract with Medavie signed or not signed at this point in time? Thank you.



[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Again, I note that we have answered the question. Yesterday, the Minister of Health did in fact answer this question. So, I am asking the Leader of the Opposition one more time to answer our questions.

[Original]

I think the Leader of the Opposition should answer the questions that we have as well and also answer the questions that New Brunswickers have. In his reply to the speech from the throne, unprompted, the Leader of the Opposition said that he did not support or promote the LNG tax break that was given to the terminal in 2005, yet we have evidence to the contrary. Maybe there is something with the evidence that needs to be clarified. I think the Leader of the Opposition should certainly be given the chance to do so. However, I ask him to let New Brunswickers know whether he supported or promoted the LNG tax break. Yes or no? He said no a few weeks ago. We have evidence to the contrary, and we would like for him to explain the discrepancy.

Mr. Higgs: As you know, with the rules of the House, the opposition gets the opportunity to ask questions and the government is supposed to answer them. I am hopeful that next year at this time, the current Premier will have lots of time to ask questions as the Leader of the Opposition, and I will answer them. At this point in time, I am here in my role to ask questions. The government's role is to answer questions.

We have not had one square answer yet on this very simple question, so I am going back. I am going back on it, and all I want—and I will move on as soon as I get a square answer—is to know whether the contract for Medavie has been signed or not signed at this point in time. That is all I want to know. Yes or no from the Premier. Let's stop deflection. Yes or no—signed or not signed?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I appreciate the question, but we provided an answer yesterday. Once again, the Minister of Health has been very transparent with the media and New Brunswickers when he answered these questions.

[Original]

Again, I want to ask the Leader of the Opposition to clarify. He is right. I do not dispute the fact that question period is designed to have the opposition and other parties ask questions of the government. I am not going to dispute that. However, if he thinks that he is going to be able to go through the next few months and go through a campaign without answering this question from the people of New Brunswick, the Leader of the Opposition will be surprised, I think. New Brunswickers deserve to know the answer to this. They deserve to know and have it explained why there was a discrepancy between what the Leader of the Opposition said a few weeks ago about supporting and promoting the LNG terminal tax break that was given in 2005 and the



piece of evidence that we found where, yes, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition was supporting and promoting the LNG terminal tax break.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Mr. Higgs: A member referred earlier to the expenses or the amount of money in a certain article. I am thinking that this is not chump change. This is, over a 10-year agreement, a \$2-billion contract—an untendered, sole-sourced agreement. I cannot understand why this is difficult. This is a big issue for the citizens. It is a big issue for the province. It is a big issue for health care and the continuation of health care as we know it.

Let's say this. Was there a date when the contract was actually signed? If the Premier will not answer yes or no, maybe we should say: On what date was the contract signed? That should be straightforward. If there is no date, I realize that it means it was not signed. Nevertheless, trying to get a square answer to a square question, what was the date that the contract was signed? Could the Premier answer that? Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Once again, I repeat that the Minister of Health answered the questions from the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. So, I think that the Leader of the Opposition has a chance to answer our questions and the questions New Brunswickers have.

[*Original*]

He wants to talk about chump change. I do not think that it was chump change, the tax break that the LNG terminal got in 2005. What I think is very important for the people of our province to understand is this: What role did the Leader of the Opposition play? I want to say it again. It was unprompted. It was not a question. He decided, in his reply to the speech from the throne, to bring up the tax break to the LNG terminal. He decided to bring it up and deny that he supported and promoted the LNG terminal tax break. Yet we have evidence where the Leader of the Opposition was indeed supporting and promoting the tax break given to the LNG terminal. If there is a discrepancy in that evidence, the people of New Brunswick deserve to hear what it is from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Mr. Higgs: Let me ask the same question in another way: Is the contract signed, as of 10:54 a.m. on November 8...

(Interjections.)

Mr. Higgs: Sorry, November 9, 2017. As of today's date and time, is the contract signed? Would that be a fair question for which to get an answer, finally? My question is this: Is the contract signed as of this date and time? Thank you.



[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Once again, I remind everyone that the Minister of Health answered the questions from the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, so I would ask him why he is not willing to answer the questions we are asking him. Quite frankly, a lot of New Brunswickers are asking him the same questions.

[Original]

We have the Leader of the Opposition, unprompted, in his prepared speech from the throne reply, saying the following two things. He denies supporting and promoting the tax break to the LNG terminal when we have evidence to suggest that he indeed supported and promoted the LNG tax break. In the same speech, unprompted and written in his script, he said that he was against Living SJ, a program in which we are investing millions of dollars to end generational poverty in the city of Saint John. He is okay with tax breaks for big business but not okay with investments to help the people of our province get lifted out of poverty. He should answer those questions.

Mr. Higgs: Well, I guess the fact that the Premier will not answer is revealing in itself, right? It is as if there is an opportunity here to deal with this and make it right by the province, but the Premier refuses to answer a very straight question.

If that is the case and it is not signed and if the Minister of Health is basically correct... Although the Premier will not acknowledge that, so I would daresay that the Minister of Health spoke out of bounds yesterday. That is what it would seem. But if it is not signed, then why do we not open it up for discussion? Why do we not understand the service levels that are going to be met on this contract? Why do we not look at what it really means to New Brunswickers? Also, why do we not understand whether performance clauses that are indeed supposed to be there, which we do not know yet ... Is there an exit clause to get out of this contract that is not signed at this point in time?

The Premier has every opportunity to make it right by the citizens of this province. This is the opportunity we have. Let's not lose it.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: As the Minister of Health pointed out, the Leader of the Opposition was briefed. He was at one of the public sessions where this was discussed. Yet despite the fact that he went to that, he still comes in the Legislature to say things that just are not the case about this program. He is giving the impression that there is privatization happening, which is not the case.

This will be a publicly funded program. It is going to be managed by a nonprofit organization. There will be no cuts to any of the services. In fact, services will be enhanced. There is not one New Brunswicker who would listen to what has been said by the Leader of the Opposition with regard to extra-mural who would think any of that.

Despite the fact that the Leader of the Opposition was properly briefed and despite the fact that we were transparent and had him at a public session asking questions, he still is saying that



it is things that it is not. It will be publicly funded, it will be managed by a nonprofit organization, it will increase visitations, and it will make sure health care is accessible to all.

[*Translation*]

Highways

Mr. Coon: Last week, I asked the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure the following question: Along which highways does he plan to install wildlife fencing this year? He did not answer my question.

The wildlife collision problem is a serious one, but a lot less fencing is being put up. It seems that fencing is only installed along newly built highways, like the four-lane highway between St. Stephen and Lepreau or the Caraquet bypass.

Will the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure finally tell us if any fencing was installed between 2013 and 2016 where such accidents are most likely to occur?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Fraser: I want to thank the member opposite for the question and for raising an important issue. At the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, we take the safety of the traveling public very seriously. We have many things that go into wildlife mitigation, including brushcutting, enhanced signage, warning signs, public awareness campaigns, and moose fencing. I can tell you that we invested significant dollars in wildlife mitigation last year, the year before, and again this year. We will continue to do everything we can to mitigate the risks associated with wildlife issues.

Mr. Coon: As it turns out, the department has been using data collected between 3 and 10 years ago to determine which areas are hot spots along our highways and roads. However, based on the number of collisions between vehicles and moose over the past few months and this year, it seems clear to me that this data is outdated and that it is necessary to build more wildlife fencing.

The Shediac fire chief has called a section of Highway 15 between Shediac and Dieppe a “serious threat to public safety”. The Mayor of Shediac sent a letter to the province asking for fencing in September, which the minister rejected. Other highways with moose collisions reported this year include two sections of Route 8 between McGivney and Blackville, the section between Russellville Road and Allardville, and Highway 2 between Sackville and Moncton.

Will the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure confirm whether there has been any wildlife fencing constructed this year that is not associated with the building of new highways?

Hon. Mr. Fraser: What I can confirm here today is that I had a conversation with the Mayor of Shediac just yesterday in regard to the situation in the Shediac region. We have set up a meeting with him and the public safety committee, which includes the Shediac fire chief,



Ambulance New Brunswick personnel, RCMP, and other members of council. We are going to be having that meeting to look at the most up-to-date data that they, as a group, have collected. We are going to do the right thing for the safety of that section of highway.

As I said, we take the safety of the traveling public very seriously. We have invested heavily in wildlife mitigation in the past three years. We are going to continue to do that.

Mr. Coon: It seems to me that the minister's department has not been building wildlife fencing on existing roads and highways where there are hot spots for wildlife. The minister has said in the past that the construction of wildlife fencing is important strategic infrastructure and that the government believes in investing in strategic infrastructure. I think it is important to recognize that this form of structure requires routine maintenance, such as the maintenance that was done to fix the fence on Route 7 between Saint John and Fredericton to keep New Brunswickers safe.

This week, the government released its 2018-19 capital budget. Can the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure tell the House if any money is allocated in this capital budget for the construction of wildlife fencing on existing routes? If so, how much is allocated for this initiative in the 2018-19 budget?

Hon. Mr. Fraser: Once again, I want to thank the member opposite for bringing this important issue to light. We are very much aware of it. Every year, there are horrific accidents on New Brunswick highways that we have to deal with, whether they are collisions with other motor vehicles or collisions with wildlife.

As I said yesterday, my heart and my thoughts go out to the people who are involved in those horrific accidents, and I am sure that every member here and every member of the public is aware of the situation or has a family member who was involved in one type or another of those situations. We take those very seriously. We have invested heavily in wildlife mitigation. We invested over \$5 million in wildlife mitigation in 2015-16, over \$4.4 million in 2016-17, and another \$4.1 million in 2017-18. We will be investing more money in the coming budget to do more wildlife mitigation because we take this very seriously.

Health Care Services

Mr. Higgs: I think it is very safe to say that anyone listening to question period today would realize that the contract has not been signed.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Higgs: So now, I have a \$2-billion question. The question is: Since the contract has not been signed, let's understand the real benefits to the citizens of the province from privatizing health care. Let's understand the rules that are going to govern a better action by Medavie or by anyone, but let's first understand if there is any real value to the citizens of this province. I would say this: Let's get it right. Let's pull back on this. Let's pull back on an untendered, sole-



sourced agreement that has nothing defined in terms of how it is going to improve life and health care in this province. Let's get it right.

Will the Premier agree to put all the facts on the table? Let's have an open and transparent discussion. Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I want to let the Leader of the Opposition know that a memorandum of understanding has been signed with Medavie concerning the Extra-Mural Program, and we are finalizing the details of the contract. As you know, we cannot reveal the details of a contract that has not been signed; that is standard practice.

A standard escape clause and performance indicators will be included in the contract.

[Original]

I also want to again assure the Leader of the Opposition and, more importantly, the people of New Brunswick that extra-mural services will continue to be publicly funded. Under this project, the management will be done by a nonprofit organization. We will continue to deliver accessible, high-quality health care to all. This project will help do that by increasing visitations, having synergies with other important players in health care, and making sure that the families of our province get the health care they need and deserve.

