

December 20, 2017

[*Translation*]

### Carbon Tax

**Mr. Higgs:** When the Premier went to Ottawa for a Christmas reception, did he also go there to get permission for this farce or to offer his personal thanks for the federal transfer funds, which will support his attempts to get re-elected?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** If I understand the question correctly, the Opposition Leader is talking about our relationship with the Trudeau government. I can tell you that we are very proud to be working with the Trudeau government and its entire team, including the 10 MPs and 2 ministers from New Brunswick. I can tell you that we are proud to work with them, because they are helping us tremendously to move forward with New Brunswickers' priorities of growing the economy and improving the education sector and our health care system.

Together, we are investing in our infrastructure and helping small business. Together, we are making sure we improve postsecondary education opportunities. In addition, we are helping the middle class, which is of tremendous assistance in driving our economy here in New Brunswick. We are investing more in training programs and in mental health and home-care programs. We are proud to work with the Trudeau government.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Higgs:** This is simply a mirage. It does not do anything but give the Premier some breathing room until the next election, through the election year. It also puts some more tax money in political peril.

One thing is certain, that there is money on the move. The method might be different, but the motive is still the same: getting control of more tax dollars for the government's tax-and-spend agenda. Is this tax money coming from roads, the same roads that are in such a mess right now? Thank you.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** The people of New Brunswick got a chance to see the Leader of the Opposition in action when he was the Minister of Finance. They saw that he had an austerity agenda.

(Interjections.)



**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** They saw that he was cutting into education and health care. They saw that he was cutting into investments in roads and bridges. He was cutting into things that would help the ordinary New Brunswicker, all the while ensuring that he helped the wealthy and the large corporations. His plan of austerity had our economy retract when he was the Minister of Finance.

We have a plan to invest in things that will help grow the economy. We have a plan to invest in education, and we have a plan to invest in health care. That multiyear plan is working for all New Brunswickers. The economy is growing. People have more money in their pockets with their wages increasing. Yes, we are moving things forward and getting things done.

**Mr. Higgs:** More money in people's pockets? We see \$1 000 more out of the pocket of every man, woman, and child in this province since this Premier came to office. That does not translate into more money in your pocket. It also does not translate into more money in the pockets of businesses when fewer than half of the businesses can take advantage of a business tax.

While the people are distracted by the Premier and his pretend fight with the feds... I guess he is trying to toughen up coming into the election or he is trying to make people believe he is trying to toughen up but flying up to get permission to do so before the election year, before the Christmas period.

Something is going on with the Premier. He is taking money from one place, and he is moving it to another place. Financial sleight of hand, we might say, but we have seen lots of that, have we not? We have yet to see an occasion where this sort of thing actually benefited taxpayers. This is the sort of thing that leads to buying a shipyard or funding marijuana operations. Why is the Premier moving money with a dedicated purpose like roads and moving it into a position where politics can decide where it goes?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I have to take issue with what he said in his preamble. We saw what the Leader of the Opposition did when he was the Minister of Finance. New Brunswickers all saw it. He had an austerity plan, cutting into education and health care, which retracted our economy. Well, we have a plan of growth—investing in education, investing in training, and investing in our people.

The Leader of the Opposition says that there are New Brunswickers who do not have more money in their pockets. Well, here is what he did and here is what we are doing. He wants to help the wealthy and large corporations. That is why he opposed taxing the richest 1% in this province more. That is why he opposed raising taxes on the largest corporations. We are lowering small business taxes to help all the entrepreneurs around our province. We increased the minimum wage. We are putting forward pay equity, the most lucrative HST rebate for those



who need it, free tuition for those who need it the most, and wage increases for day care operators.

**Mr. Higgs:** Once again, the Premier missed the question.

While people are distracted by the Premier's pretend fighting with the feds, something is going on with the Premier. The Premier is taking money from one place and moving it to another place—a financial sleight of hand. We have yet to see an occasion where this sort of thing benefits taxpayers. This is the sort of thing that leads to buying a shipyard or funding marijuana operations. Why is the Premier moving money with a dedicated purpose such as roads to where politics can decide where it goes? What is the logic for doing that? Thank you very much.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** We will tell you why we put forward our carbon tax mechanism. Number one, making sure that we have a price on carbon is an important step in ensuring that we are going to combat climate change, which is the largest challenge facing humanity. But we did it in a way that respects New Brunswick's economy, its challenges, and its opportunities. We are going to put a carbon price mechanism in place that will have large emitters pay their fair share, and, yes, consumers will not have to pay more under our carbon pricing mechanism.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to get up today and pretend that he is the guy who will invest in infrastructure, well, I think that his actions when he was Minister of Finance speak a lot louder than his words today. Our actions speak a lot louder than his words. We have invested in infrastructure. We have invested in our hospitals, invested in our schools, and invested in the logistical roads and bridges that will help get our products to market and help grow our economy.

**Mr. Higgs:** When was the federal minister made aware of the details that were announced last week on the gasoline tax? The pretend fight that the Premier is having with Ottawa seems to have originated on Wednesday and seems to have been designed to distract from the financial sleight of hand that is going on. The Premier spoke with the minister in Ottawa on Wednesday night at a Liberal holiday party. Then, on Thursday, the minister put out a Facebook post.

What are the Premier's intentions after the election if he is to be successful? What is the real cost per family for what is coming after 2018? We know this big strategy is to avoid any more taxes—more taxes that have a major impact on the province already. It would have a devastating impact as it continues from this government's tax-and-spend policy. What is the real cost per family for what is coming after the 2018 election unless New Brunswickers vote this Premier out? Let's get the details for after 2018 because this is what this is: a delay tactic because the Premier will not come clean once again.



**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** You are right. This is to avoid raising taxes on consumers and on the people of our province. That is exactly what our carbon pricing mechanism is doing. It is asking large emitters to pay their fair share while ensuring that we do not ask our consumers to pay more. I want to be very clear. I want to be very clear. We are playing our role to combat climate change. We have hit our 2030 emission targets that the federal government has put forward. We are moving forward to eliminate coal by 2030 as long as we can ensure that we have another generation of electricity in that region that will not be a shock to ratepayers.

And, yes, we have a gas tax that is higher than Alberta's gas tax. Alberta was the province that the federal government used to develop the backstop. I have made it loud and clear, and I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will join me. When Manitoba finally hits its targets for 2030, when Alberta raises its taxes to ours when it comes to gas, and when Nova Scotia eliminates coal, they can come and talk to us to do more.

**Mr. Higgs:** The question remains: What is the real cost per family for what is coming after the 2018 election should this Premier stay in office? We are hoping that will not be the case. This Premier should be fair with the citizens of this province and explain what his carbon tax plan is after 2018. He has a devious plan here in order to get through 2018, but what happens after that in order to meet the federal schedule to 2022? It is time. It is fair. Let's be real with the citizens of this province regarding the taxes that have come under this Premier.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Minister, order.

**Mr. Higgs:** What is going to be the continued plan for more taxes under the carbon tax plan from this Premier?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I want to be very, very clear: Consumers will see no tax increase when it comes to gas at the pumps. I want to be very clear as well—and I want to make it very, very clear to the Leader of the Opposition—that we will be asking large emitters to pay their fair share.

That really is the difference between us and the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives want to help the wealthy and help big businesses, while we are going to ensure that the big businesses that are the large emitters pay their fair share when it comes to our carbon pricing mechanism and that there be no extra taxes when it comes to consumers. The reason for that is we have already raised the gas tax. New Brunswickers are already leaders when it comes to ensuring that we have a price on the carbon we use. We do not think that just because we raised the gas tax a few months before we had these discussions nationally, New Brunswickers should have to pay more. We will stand by this mechanism, and the Leader of the Opposition should too.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.



**Mr. Higgs:** The Premier's tune changes as we get closer to the election period. It went from a revenue-neutral plan, so now it is back to revenue neutral. Or it is back to the consumers will not see anything new, which was our plan from the beginning: no new taxes. So that is encouraging—no new taxes—and that is where the Premier is today. I want to be sure that what he is saying is that there will be no new carbon taxes on the citizens of this province either next year or following 2018, should he continue in government after September of that year.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order, members.

**Mr. Higgs:** Is that what he is saying, that there will be no new taxes on the citizens of this province? Now, that can come in the form of direct taxes, or that can come in the form of passed-down taxes from a change that the Premier makes. But let me hear it clearly. Is the Premier stating there will be no new taxes on the citizens of this province should he continue as Premier? Is that his statement?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I can guarantee the people of New Brunswick that we are going to stand by our carbon pricing mechanism that has large emitters paying their fair share, and, yes, that would have no new taxes at the gas pump for the people of our province. The reason is that we have already raised the gas tax. We are already higher than Alberta, which was the province used by the federal government to develop the backstop.

I can tell you that we will stand up to anybody who tries to say that this carbon pricing mechanism is not working. It is working. We are hitting our 2030 emission targets. We are still doing this in a way that we are growing the economy, and we will continue to do so once we go through the next few months and ask the people of New Brunswick to give us their confidence again. If we are so lucky to get that confidence, I can guarantee you that this carbon pricing mechanism will be what we stand up for. The federal government can do what it wants to do, but we will stand up to it with this carbon pricing mechanism.

**Mr. Higgs:** Once again, there you have it: No new taxes at the gas pump. There are all kinds of ways—this government has found so many—to put new taxes on the citizens of this province but no new taxes at the gas pump. There it is. It is a wide-open sheet after that.

If he wants someone to stand up, then I would suggest that he stand up to Ottawa. Stand up to Ottawa and say that we do not need new taxes of any kind in this province because we are taxed out. I would suggest that if we want to enforce the carbon plan in New Brunswick, we are already there. Our targets are already there for 2030, and we have been saying that since the beginning. But enforce regulation and not taxation because taxation is the only innovation this government has. Innovation through taxation is not a solution for this province. It will not fix it, and it will not put it on the right track. It will continue to bury it. The taxation policy has to change, so will he stand up to Ottawa and not put more taxes of any kind on the citizens?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.



**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I think we made it very clear that, yes, indeed, we will stand up for this carbon pricing mechanism because it is the right approach. It is going to ensure that New Brunswick steps up and does even more to combat climate change, which is the largest challenge of this generation of humanity. We all need to play our part. That is why we put in a pricing mechanism for carbon that asks large emitters to pay more. It will not have an impact at the gas pumps for consumers.

I find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition does not like it. He says that we should not be doing any of this and we should have regulations and all that jazz. What that tells me is he has admitted that he knows we are not going to increase the gas tax on consumers. He is upset that we are going to ask large emitters to pay their fair share, and it just goes back to what we already know about the opposition and the conservatives. He wants to ensure that we focus on the wealthy and on large corporations. We want to ensure that we grow the economy in a way that it works for all New Brunswickers.

### Health Care Services

**Ms. Lynch:** I can give 14 000 reasons why the deal for the Extra-Mural Program should be scrapped, and they all involve ambulances. Ambulances were parked 14 000 times. When we tried to get details about ambulance coverage, we were told that the information is intellectual property and that the elected representatives of New Brunswickers cannot have the details. The media are getting the same treatment. Will the Health Minister explain why his government is ramming through the Extra-Mural Program deal despite the ambulance fiasco?

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** I am happy to rise again to talk about this wonderful partnership that we will be starting with Medavie on January 1. All of this is to enhance the level of quality services that are already provided by all these services. It will continue to be provided, and it will be that same level of quality. Yet again, we will see enhanced levels coming forward further down the road.

That will be the case, not only with the Extra-Mural Program but also with Ambulance New Brunswick, because we will see more integrated services. It is all that notion of community paramedicine, which is so vital. We will see more paramedics able to go into the homes of New Brunswickers to provide increased service and also to help the Extra-Mural Program. Everybody will know what everybody else is doing, which is not the case. Mind you, there was little done during the opposition's tenure as government. We are moving ahead with this because we will see it not only maintained but also increased.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, minister.

**Ms. Lynch:** The people of New Brunswick do not think that it is a wonderful deal. The people of New Brunswick have no reason to trust the government or the Premier to do what is right on health care or, for that matter, on any of the other important programs that New Brunswickers



need. Privatizing health care is the tip of the iceberg. The no-carbon tax, the pot patronage program, the Premier's party plane—the people are not pleased.

I will ask the Health Minister once again: What is to prevent a mess, such as the 14 000-ambulance fiasco, from happening with the Extra-Mural Program? Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** Once again, it allows me to reiterate what we have been saying. Yes, when you look at the numbers, they are considerable. However, when you look at the bigger picture, the larger context, we know that our hours of being out of service due to nonstaffing were hovering around 21 000 hours in 2016-17. We know that the scheduled hours for deployment were 789 000 hours. That means that 97.3% of the time, there were no staffing shortages. The service was provided as it was planned.

Again, I do want to say that we do recognize that there is an issue with staffing and it has to do with recruitment. We have been saying this over and over again. We, as a government, are doing things about it. We now have three training programs instead of the one that there was while the members opposite were in power. We are seeing improvements.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, minister.

**Ms. Lynch:** This is not the first time that I have questioned this government about ambulance service, and I do not think that it will be the last. When a private company is contracted by the government of the people of New Brunswick to provide a service and it fails, it should have to answer to the people of New Brunswick. Can the minister—or maybe the Premier, because the Premier always likes to get on his feet to answer my questions—give me a straight answer? This will be a Christmas present for all New Brunswickers.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Lynch:** If Ambulance New Brunswick cannot respond in a timely fashion, how in the world is it going to do house calls and how is it going to take on extra duties to treat clients in their homes? Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I appreciate the invitation from the opposition to get up on my feet again. I always like to debate this. I want to give a very straight answer. The words that are used by the opposition are not saying what this deal really is. Using the word “privatization”, we believe, is a mischaracterization, and it is unfortunate. We understand why there are many New Brunswickers who have concerns. This is going to be a publicly funded program, with employees who are publicly funded and who work for the government. We are using a nonprofit organization, which I have never heard the opposition members say, to help us manage this.



We are going to have greater integration, all with the goals of increasing the number of visits in the Extra-Mural Program across the province and of helping our seniors live in their homes longer. This is all with the goal of decreasing the number of ER visits that extra-mural patients have to make because they did not get the services they need in their homes. All the while, we are ensuring that there is the same quality. I would like to hear the opposition members admit that they are aware of all these things.

[Translation]

## Electoral Reform

**Mr. Coon:** The Standing Committee on Economic Policy has met for 85 hours since November 7 to review and amend bills, but not one of the amendments I have proposed has been accepted. Moreover, significant bills, such as the one to amend the *Public Health Act*, have not even been considered. A proportional representation system would improve the democratic process by promoting a cooperative legislative environment. Will the Premier add a referendum question on proportional representation to the 2018 election ballots?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** We are very proud to work with all members to advance New Brunswickers' priorities of growing the economy so that it works for everyone and improving the education sector and our health care system.

We appreciate the work being done by the leader of the third party, and I can tell you that we often take his suggestions into consideration for future introduction and implementation. However, that is not always the case, which is quite normal. We will not always agree with him, just as I am sure he does not always agree with us.

The important thing is for us to be able to debate and discuss in a transparent manner so that New Brunswickers can see what is going on in their province with regard to the major policies that concern them. I can tell you that we are very proud to continue working in this way with the members and with all New Brunswickers in order to grow the economy, invest more in the education sector, and improve our health care system.

[Original]

**Mr. Coon:** With this first-past-the-post majority, this government tends to view the Legislative Assembly as, well, a rubber stamp for its bills rather than as a place for collaborative lawmaking where amendments are considered on their merits. In New Brunswick, proportional representation would mean greater government accountability, less mismanagement, and a more effective opposition. In fact, when an opposition cannot effectively hold the government accountable, it is more likely to make poor choices. Will the Premier allow New Brunswickers to vote on whether or not to adopt proportional representation in 2018?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty big subject, as you can imagine. We think that democracy in this province belongs to the people of New Brunswick. That is why we asked a





committee of the Legislature to go around the province and discuss electoral reform with the people of our province.

[*Translation*]

I can tell you that we greatly appreciated the fact that New Brunswickers came to submit their ideas and suggestions to us and even to share their concerns with us. We are grateful to the members who sat on this committee, which made recommendations. As you know, we have already introduced and implemented some of these recommendations. As for the others, we will continue to work on them.

Indeed, as we said, we will be holding a referendum in 2020. We sincerely believe that democracy belongs to New Brunswickers and that it is important, if voting procedures were ever to change, for them to be the ones to decide whether or not that should happen.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Coon:** It is interesting that New Zealand replaced its first-past-the-post electoral system in 1996 with a mixed-member proportional system of representation. Since that time, it has replaced dysfunctional majority governments with elected minority or coalition governments to work for the people of that country. Since 1996, New Zealand has had stable but more collaborative governance, with only one of those line governments over that time falling since the institution of proportional representation.

New Brunswickers would benefit immensely from the collaboration across party lines that such electoral reform would bring. I do not understand why the Premier would not want to put proportional representation on the ballot for 2018 to let New Brunswickers decide. Why will he not do it?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Again, we appreciate the questions from the leader of the third party, but let me tell you that we sincerely believe that democracy belongs to New Brunswickers and that the decision is theirs.

I can tell you that, along with all political parties that have elected members, we sent people out to consult with New Brunswickers to get their ideas, suggestions, and even their concerns about electoral reform.

[*Original*]

They came forward with many recommendations to strengthen our electoral system in our province. Yes, indeed, we said that there would be a referendum in 2020 to vote on recommendations that would have to do with voting. I want to say that we have done and are



doing things to improve our electoral system, whether it be the banning of corporate and union donations; the cutting in half of the amount that somebody can give, from \$6 000 to \$3 000; the pool of money that will be given to women candidates when they get a vote, to help encourage women candidates; and the more municipal transparency in elections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

### **Carbon Tax**

**Mr. Jeff Carr:** Just a few minutes ago, the Premier said that he wanted to give a straight answer. That is laughable because he would not know a straight answer if it came up and bit him on the tail. I can tell you that right now.

Another thing is, going back to the carbon tax issue that we are going to see in the very near future here in New Brunswick, the Premier said that he was going to stand up for New Brunswickers and fight against Ottawa. What makes the Premier think that New Brunswickers believe that pile?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I just want to ask: A pile of what?

**Mr. Jeff Carr:** That is what I thought he would answer. He does not have an answer because he has not stood up for New Brunswickers against Ottawa since he started here. That is the best nonanswer that I have heard him give in all this time.

When we talked about the Energy East Pipeline project, he ignored New Brunswickers. He let that fail. When it comes to the carbon tax that is going to be levied onto New Brunswickers and saddle New Brunswickers with an extra burden of tax... He went to Ottawa last week and had a lovely soiree with the federal minister. All of a sudden, the parameters changed on that deal.

(Interjection.)

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé will come to order.

**Mr. Jeff Carr:** The former Minister of Health has lots to say now, does he not?

I want to know whether the Premier knew before, during, or after that lovely soiree that the goalpost would change on the carbon tax plan.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I am disappointed but not surprised. I am not surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives say that they are against our carbon pricing mechanism. Why is that? It is because we are protecting consumers by making sure that there is no increase at the gas pump and we are asking large emitters, which are large businesses, to pay their fair share. We have seen this time and time again from the Leader of the Opposition and from the



Conservatives. They want to help the wealthy, they want to help big businesses, and they want to cut, with their austerity plan, into education and health care.

[*Translation*]

We have a plan we are very proud of, and it is supported by the Trudeau government. This plan is for investment in the economic growth of our province. We are investing in things that will be of long-term assistance to our economy and in things that will improve education and our health care system.

[*Original*]

We will continue to work with the Trudeau government on our growth agenda, and we will debate and fight against the austerity agenda of the opposition.

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

**Mr. Jeff Carr:** I think the Premier forgot to answer how he is planning on convincing New Brunswickers that he is going to stand up to Ottawa and not get in bed with them, because that is what he has done for the past three years and two months. He has catered to everything that Justin Trudeau has asked him and told him to do. Why would New Brunswickers believe that after the 2018 election, he is still going to fight for them when a carbon tax is pushed down our throats from Ottawa?

When the small businesses of New Brunswick were crying for somebody to stand up for them, the Premier went hiding. He went silent. When the goalposts on the Energy East Pipeline project were changed because of his inaction when he followed Ontario and Quebec and what their needs were, the Premier went silent. New Brunswickers suffered. Is he going to commit to New Brunswickers today that he is going to continue to fight for them, as he says he will, against Ottawa and carbon tax prices?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** It is interesting because I said that several times. Yes, we are going to stand up for our carbon pricing mechanism. The reason for that is that we recognize that we have to play our role to combat climate change.

We are going to play that role in a way that respects New Brunswick's economic realities, challenges, and opportunities. Our carbon pricing mechanism does exactly that. It asks large emitters to pay their fair share, and it does not raise gas taxes for consumers. The reason for this is that we had already raised the gas tax months before this was even a discussion with the federal government. We raised it, and it is higher than Alberta's, which is the province the federal government used to develop the backstop in the first place. We have a plan to eliminate coal by 2030, and Nova Scotia does not have that plan. We are growing the economy, all the while hitting our emissions targets for 2030 because we have a balanced approach focused on growth and not on austerity.





**Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick**  
**Oral Questions**

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

