

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



November 26, 2019

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### IMMUNIZATION

**Mr. D. Landry** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Interim Opposition Leader, L): It was shocking to see a bill introduced in the House invoking the notwithstanding clause for the first time in the history of New Brunswick.

[Original]

In English, it is the notwithstanding clause.

[Translation]

It means that this bill denies people their individual rights under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. It denies people their individual rights.

[Original]

Does the Premier understand what he has done here, and is he personally okay with denying people their charter rights? I repeat, Mr. Speaker: Is the Premier personally okay with denying people their charter rights?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Cardy** (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question.

[Original]

I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. The decision to use the notwithstanding clause, of course, is never taken lightly. In this particular case, the reason it was decided that it would be used was as a result of what I believe we all have seen over the course of recent months—a rising tide of anti-vaccination sentiment. It is rising not just around the world but also here in our province. These are folks who are routinely on pages that I am well aware MLAs from the opposition side of the House have reviewed and participated in, in some cases. They post expressions of anti-Semitism, the belief that the earth is flat, and the belief that the 9/11 terrorist attacks by Islamist organizations were, in fact, caused by the American government or a shadowy international conspiracy.

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If the members of the opposition choose to ally themselves with these particular individuals and those particular causes, it is entirely within their rights to do so. However, on this side of the House, we will stand up for vulnerable children. We will protect them in the name of science and in the name of making sure that our province is ready to...

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Guitard): Time, minister.

**Mr. D. Landry** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Does the Premier understand why this clause has never been used before in New Brunswick history and why, when the clause was introduced in 1982, the then Premier, Richard Hatfield, vowed never to use it? What do you think about it, Mr. Premier?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I think that what is very clear is that we are in very different times compared to 1982. We have epidemics that were never even thought of at that time. We have talked about the mental health issues. We have talked about the drug issues. Now, we have a situation where we really do not know how many kids are coming to school protected. We really do not know their vulnerability.

We have more people coming to our country now from all over the world, which is a great thing because we need every one of them, but we all want to ensure the health of our children. Sometimes you have to figure out why we cannot ensure that. This clause is there to allow us to protect our kids. It is to allow us to make the necessary moves to have vaccinations.

Certainly, from our discussions and our research to date, most people, by far, believe that their kids should be vaccinated and that they should not be at risk going to school. That is why it is going to be an open vote. I am hopeful that this will not be a political discussion. It will be one that is on the protection of our kids. We will take whatever measures are necessary in order to do just that. I would encourage you to talk to your ridings to understand how people think. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. D. Landry** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, we know the Premier of our province likes the policies of Ontario Premier Doug Ford. He threatened to use the notwithstanding clause a year ago. At the time, there was a lot of concern about setting a dangerous precedent. Is this yet another example of the Premier imitating the bad policies of another Conservative government?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): What this is, is an example of leadership from the government of New Brunswick. It is an example

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of us not kicking the ball down the road and just making politics out of it. It is an example of showing what is needed in order to protect not only our kids... You are going to see more examples of that, just as you have over the past year. The status quo is not acceptable. We have huge challenges in every sector, and in the past, we have kicked them down the road. We are not here to do that. We are here on a mission, and our mission is to save New Brunswick. We need help. I have said this all over our province. We need help.

We have seen one example after another where the only focus of the previous government was asking: How much money can I spend to buy your vote? That was it. There was nothing beyond that. How many jobs can I create with your tax dollars? There was no plan. There was no future for our province. There was just more and more of the same.

We will do what is necessary and do what is right for our province, and I am proud to be part of it. Thank you very much.

**Mr. D. Landry** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Interim Opposition Leader, L): This has been called a dangerous precedent, a slippery slope. Can the Premier see other cases where he would simply decide to suspend the rights that people have under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): This is not about any precedent. This is not about anything else other than vaccinations. But, you know, we have seen precedents set in this House. We have seen closure invoked when the discussion just ended, and I think it was used an unprecedented number of times by the previous government. I think that if we go back and look...

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): How many? Six times? There you go. It was unprecedented. So if we want to talk about setting a dangerous precedent, it is a dangerous precedent when you threaten democracy by shutting it down, and that was what we saw over and over again.

We are looking out for our kids in our province. We are going to have an open vote so that everyone has a chance to look out for the kids in his or her riding. Members will decide whether they want to do that or whether they want to continue with the game. Currently, it looks as though the game goes on.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. D. Landry** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Interim Opposition Leader, L): We agree that children should all be vaccinated. We established a student vaccination policy. Is the Premier convinced that this policy is not rigorous enough? Has he seen data

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that convinced him that we need a new policy, before taking the unprecedented measure of depriving people of their individual rights?

**Hon. Mr. Cardy** (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. In light of the obvious facts we had at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, it was clear we had a problem. We recognize that, despite the comments from people who are against vaccines and those who are in favour and tell us that they are perfectly safe, it is possible that, in 2% or 3% of cases, vaccines do not work. We know that, so we must make sure that at least 95% of our students are protected.

We can start by saying that we can take away 3% of them, because of problems with vaccines. With this bill, we want to protect the young people who cannot be vaccinated because of health problems. That leaves us with only 2% to play with. We already know we have 2% of young people whose parents have requested an exemption. So, we are already at the point where it is a public health issue. On the opposition side, parties have a choice to make, either protect the vulnerable children of our province or participate in the conspiracy...

[Original]

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Guitard): Time, minister.

[Translation]

**Mr. D. Landry** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development whether he has all the data he needs to table such a bill and try to silence people by keeping them from saying what they have to say. In the end, if he does not have all the data, namely the exact number of people, how many young people have not been vaccinated, and how many have... I do not think that, at this time, he has this data, so how can he promote policies like this one?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Cardy** (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Although I thank the member opposite for the question, it is a sad commentary on politics in our province. If the member were asking this question based on research, the member would know that every school year, we have a new intake of students and it takes 90 days for us to be able to collect that information and find out what happened with their vaccination records.

Every year, this information has had to be updated—for a long time, under many governments. There is no blame here. For many years, that information was not collected

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at all. We are now making sure that it is collected, because that is what we are doing on this side of the House: We are making sure that data is collected and that decisions are made based on evidence and facts.

What we will be doing now is, as soon as we have that additional information, we will be happy to share it with the House in the way that I have shared it in public and shared it with the member opposite, my colleague the critic. I will be very happy to continue to do that in that spirit, because this is more important than party politics. It is about protecting vulnerable children. That is why we are here today having this discussion. I hope I can count on the members opposite for their support. Thank you.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): It has been stated that the notwithstanding clause has been used rarely in the history of this country—actually, only three times in a meaningful manner since its inception 40 years ago. My question, on the same topic, is for the Attorney General. Is the Attorney General comfortable that we need to deny people the rights afforded them under the charter for this particular piece of legislation?

**Hon. Mrs. Anderson-Mason** (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John West, Minister of Justice, Attorney General, Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation, PC): Thank you very much for the question. As the member opposite is fully aware, before any legislation can come before the House, the Office of the Attorney General has to sign off on it. It is a pretty simple answer that I have for him today. That legislation is here before the House, and clearly, the Office of the Attorney General has signed off on it. Thank you.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): I take it the Office of the Attorney General approved the legislation, as stated and as drafted, that we have before the Legislature here today. Normalizing the use of that clause, I submit, will create a dangerous precedent. To the Attorney General, the minister in charge of the department that writes all the legislation that comes before this House: Can we expect to see more bills that take this heavy-handed, unprecedented, and unusual step? If a bill will not stand up to a challenge because it denies people their individual rights, can we expect to see more use of this notwithstanding clause?

**Hon. Mrs. Anderson-Mason** (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John West, Minister of Justice, Attorney General, Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation, PC): Thank you again for that question. It is so rare that I have the opportunity to stand in the House. But I think the question is particularly important, and I refer again to my colleague the Minister of Education, who has indicated that this is an issue that is of such significant importance to the province and to the safety of children in New Brunswick that we are willing to go that far to invoke the notwithstanding clause. And I would certainly submit to the member opposite that if we have such important issues, we should be willing to take such a stance to protect the people of New Brunswick and particularly the most vulnerable of our society, being the children of the province. Thank you.

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**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, I fully agree that we need to make sure that children are vaccinated. We need to take measures to increase vaccination rates. But as I sat on that law amendments committee...

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Guitard): Order.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): As I sat on that law amendments committee, it became clear that we do not have a full picture of the records in this province, Mr. Speaker. If we are going to take a heavy-handed approach with the notwithstanding clause, why do we not have the full picture before us before taking this unprecedented measure? Mr. Speaker, we do have a policy on vaccinations for schoolchildren in place right now, and I want to know whether the Attorney General or her staff were presented with evidence or data that showed them that we needed the notwithstanding clause for this particular bill.

**Hon. Mrs. Anderson-Mason** (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John West, Minister of Justice, Attorney General, Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation, PC): I find that question fascinating because I also sat on the law amendments committee. In fact, I actually chaired it. I spent a significant amount of time listening to a variety of individuals who took their time to come and express their concerns to all members who were sitting on that committee, and the member opposite is the one who has actually posed this question. I find this very interesting because at the law amendments committee, when it came time for us to make recommendations, I was fully prepared to engage in vigorous conversation about what recommendations could be included with respect to the topic of Bill 39. Unfortunately, some people decided that it was time to play politics, and they did not want to engage in any conversations with respect to recommendations. As such, the report was submitted without recommendations. Really, the question is, why did the member opposite not make recommendations at that time?

## MINISTERS

**Mrs. Harris** (Miramichi Bay-Neguac, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week, we asked about an incident involving the Minister of Fisheries and his executive assistant. The union for the Department of Transportation employees says that the minister and his EA were involved in a verbal and physical confrontation with a department employee this summer. The minister did not deny that this incident happened when we asked about it last week. The Premier said that the matter had been dealt with. Can the Premier tell us specifically how the matter was dealt with and what consequences there were for the minister and his EA, who both technically report to the Premier's Office?

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**Hon. Mr. Wetmore** (Gagetown-Petitcodiac, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is great to have a question. That was dealt with. The particular incident was dealt with in July. I believe it is an HR issue. If you would like to know anything more about it, certainly, you should do a right to information request.

You know, what I am more concerned about is the meeting that I had yesterday with a big seafood purchaser from Korea. This gentleman, over from Korea, made a commitment that they are going to be doubling their lobster purchases in New Brunswick over the next year or so. So, certainly, on this side of the House, that is what we are concerned about. I am not concerned about the member for Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston in terms of what her problems are. What I am concerned about is what is going on in the province and how we can energize the private sector.

**Mrs. Harris** (Miramichi Bay-Neguac, L): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it is unreal that the member opposite would switch the conversation when we are talking about a serious allegation.

You are a minister of the Crown in New Brunswick. Shame on you. It is not okay for a minister to jump out of his car and start yelling at an employee. We have a code of conduct for MLAs that holds us to a higher standard. Cabinet ministers are held to an even higher standard still. Would stepping aside not be the right thing for this minister to do, or for the Premier to remove him from Cabinet until we have full disclosure of what happened here? The incident described is just not acceptable. Ministers cannot treat employees that way. It should not be done this way. Will you step down?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I think it is certainly a fair comment that it is a serious incident. We take any employee interactions seriously, and we deal with them. That is why it came as a surprise to me when it surfaced here in the media, because we did take it seriously. I will not talk about specifics, but disciplinary action was taken. We worked with HR to do that. We believe that the case was dealt with, that we took it very seriously, and that it was through.

Reading about it coming forward, I was surprised that it is still an issue. I agree with the member. It is not acceptable. It is not acceptable to have any type of abusive situation, whether it be physical or verbal. We would not tolerate it, and we did not. We dealt with it. I am not sure where this is going, but we feel that the disciplinary action was suitable for the situation and that it was done promptly. Thank you.

**Mrs. Harris** (Miramichi Bay-Neguac, L): It is a rare day when the Premier and I agree on something. That is great, because it is wrong and it is unacceptable. They report to you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier, can you at least clarify how the matter was dealt with, how the political employee was dealt with, and how your minister was dealt with? Was there a suspension? Was it with or without pay?

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What about the Minister of Transportation? Is he going to protect his employees while they are working hard out on the roads to keep New Brunswickers safe? It must be a scary thing for them to see this minister and his EA driving around, wondering whether they are going to get out of their car again.

This is now before the RCMP, so it is a rather serious incident. Has this minister attended, or has the EA attended, the respectful workplace training? Mr. Premier, this is something that needs to be looked after. You cannot allow this bullying to happen from members of your team—your Cabinet and your MLAs.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Guitard): Time, member.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that without getting into specifics, which would not be appropriate here in the House, regarding the action that was taken, if we can do that through a process, I would certainly share that. I guess I just want to assure the member that we did take it seriously. We do not accept abuse in any form, and it was dealt with on all counts. I do not know what more to say about that.

In relation to the RCMP, it was news to me that it was going to be... If it goes to the RCMP, then so be it. That is fine. But we felt that it was dealt with. It was significant enough that we needed to react quickly, and it is something that we do not feel will happen again, because it will not be tolerated.

## CARBON TAX

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): The Premier announced that he is close to a deal with the Prime Minister on taking over the administration of the carbon charge on fossil fuels for consumers. The effectiveness of a modest carbon charge for consumers in reducing the consumption of fossil fuels is entirely dependent on whether the revenues are actually used to provide programs to citizens that make it possible for them to insulate their homes, upgrade their heating systems, or gain access to public transportation.

Will the Premier earmark the revenue that the province will receive from the consumer carbon charge to fund the programs and incentives that are needed by our citizens so that they are able to reduce their energy consumption and lower their costs for home heating and transportation?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question. I guess we have to see whether it will be accepted or not. We do believe that it will be, but we have not heard officially. I am scheduling a meeting with the

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Prime Minister, at which time maybe I will be told. We have been working with staff continually, I guess, over the last week or two since we submitted our proposal, to get an update and see where that is going. We expected, after the Cabinet was sworn in last week, that we would learn early this week, but we have not.

Given that, we will hope that, yes, it will be accepted. Then, following that, with the incremental revenue that is achieved from that, it would be the intent that we find projects that are for environmental improvements in the area—disaster relief funding or flood mitigation efforts—that are related to climate activities. If, indeed, there is additional revenue tied to this, then the idea is that it is for the purpose for which it is designed, which is to improve our environmental performance.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, in his throne speech, the Premier says he will implement the 2016 New Brunswick Climate Change Action Plan to transition to a low-carbon economy. However, he does not say where the money will come from.

New Brunswick will soon be doing the same thing as the other Atlantic Provinces and administering its own carbon tax. Can the Premier commit before the House today to using carbon tax revenues specifically for implementing the plan to transition to a low-carbon economy? This would ensure that New Brunswickers can heat their homes for less and access transportation services that meet their needs.

*[Original]*

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Leader of the Green Party added a kind of shopping list there. What I said is that, with respect to the incremental revenue that we receive—and we want to be sure that we actually receive incremental revenue in this process—we have a climate action plan. The committee for that is very nearly forthcoming, and there are a number of policies there.

When I go back, in terms of thinking of the issues around home heating and things of that nature... I remember when Efficiency NB was in place and we found where the biggest bang for the buck was in terms of reducing energy costs—reducing energy consumption. Just to say that we are going to spend X dollars on this does not necessarily change that game. I remember, in those days, understanding what it meant. All the savings identified were theoretical, so there was nothing that really showed the difference.

I guess my point, Mr. Speaker, and the only point that I want to commit to here to the Leader of the Green Party, is that for anything that we spend money on, we are going to get results, because that is what we do. Thank you.



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### PARAMEDICS

**Mr. Austin** (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Leader, PA): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, over the last year, I have had many meetings with the Minister of Health—many good meetings. I have shown my appreciation in the past with respect to work on the paramedic file, whether we discussed reclassification or the fact that now unilingual paramedics are receiving full-time work.

However, when we look at advanced care paramedics, we find that we are still falling quite short. I think that the public has to understand this. Unless you live in Bathurst, Fredericton, Moncton, or Saint John, you do not have access to an advanced care paramedic. You have access to a primary care paramedic. They do great work, but they are not skilled to the level of advanced care paramedics.

My question is for the Minister of Health. Is he willing to expand and looking to expand the advanced care paramedic program to rural areas, where longer travel times to hospitals can sometimes result in death or serious injury?

**Hon. Mr. Flemming** (Rothesay, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you for the question. The answer is pretty self-evident. Of course, we would look at it. Of course, we would take it under serious consideration. You have to realize that there are issues with respect to HR. We have to get paramedics where there is a shortage of them. We have to recruit them, we have to train them, we have to integrate them into the system, and things like that.

Paramedics are a significant part of the challenges that we are facing in health care today. As we are running out of people and as our system is under strain for HR reasons, paramedics are the logical place where we are going to turn in order to provide the kind of care that we need on an emergency basis. The answer, to me, is pretty self-evident. Of course, we would. There is no reason not to. As the member pointed out, we have had many good discussions, and I am sure we are going to have many more.

**Mr. Austin** (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Leader, PA): I fully agree with the Minister of Health in terms of the recruitment efforts for paramedics in general.

One area where we do not have a lack of expertise is that of advanced care paramedics. As a matter of fact, there are 80 advanced care paramedics who are operating as primary care paramedics in the province. They want to work. They are eager to work. They are passionate to work. They have the license, the skills, and the expertise to work. Yet only 25 of those 80 are hired by Ambulance New Brunswick, and only 4 are actually working in the province. Fredericton alone has only a 12-hour shift of advanced care paramedics, so if you get sick or you need emergency care at the wrong point in time, you are not getting an advanced care paramedic in Fredericton.

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Again, I want to ask the Minister of Health: Is he serious? I am willing to work with him to make sure this advanced care paramedic program rolls out, especially to rural areas in New Brunswick. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Flemming** (Rothesay, Minister of Health, PC): He asked me if I was serious. Of course, I am. You know I am. This is serious business. There are times when issues should transcend politics, and health care is one of them. We cannot take this lightly. We cannot politicize it. We cannot deal with it in a manner other than one that considers the best interests of the health care of the people of New Brunswick and the citizens of New Brunswick. So, am I serious? Yes. Will I work toward this? Yes. Will we look into expanding advanced care paramedics? Yes to all. It is a self-evident answer in my judgment.

## MINISTERS

**Mr. Harvey** (Carleton-Victoria, L): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure with regard to the safety and security of the employees that work for DTI. How common is it for road crews to be subjected to abuse from the public, and what protocols are in place for workers if they feel they are being harassed or abused in their workplace at the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think we have had lots of discussion on this file. It is obviously not a common occurrence. We would not accept it to be a routine, common occurrence. It seems as though it is an issue that we have covered extensively in this question period. I said we have dealt with it through the HR program, and HR managers investigated the significance of the incident. We dealt with it in relation to the appropriate disciplinary action, and certainly, there will be no tolerance of any future occurrences. I do not know what else to say in that regard. We cannot disclose the full understanding of that, as it is an HR issue and a personnel issue and a privacy issue, which I think the members opposite would understand. But we did take it very seriously, and we will not tolerate future occurrences. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Harvey** (Carleton-Victoria, L): Well, Mr. Speaker, he did not answer the question. The question was: What protocols are in place within the department? It is a very serious matter. I guess I will ask this question to the minister. If the Premier wants to get up, that is fine.

Is the minister aware of the details of this file in relation to the incident in question? The union says an internal investigation was done. Now, the Premier is saying that the issue has been looked after. But there is still an RCMP investigation going on. People out there—we just need to know. The people need to know the truth, Mr. Premier, Mr. Minister, the government, or whatever. What is going on over there? We would like to hear the truth. If



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there is an RCMP investigation going on, if the matter has been dealt with... We would like to know the status of this file.

In the meantime, Mr. Premier, the proper thing to do is to excuse your minister while this criminal—I do not know whether it is criminal or not—this investigation is going on by the RCMP.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I guess I would ask whether there are any other adjectives out there that the members opposite would like to throw in the discussion. Talking about all the what-ifs and... Is there an investigation on? The member indicates that there is. I am not aware of any RCMP investigation. I do not know what newflash the members heard, but I am not aware. The conversations, the innuendoes, the what-ifs...

Mr. Speaker, I know the issue, I know what happened, I know we dealt with it, and I know we did it promptly. We will not tolerate it because our employment Act actually has very clear guidelines. We have no tolerance for abuse of any kind in the workplace. It is not acceptable, and it is very clear to any employee in the government of New Brunswick. That is not unique to DTI, Mr. Speaker. That is the same situation that exists in every other operation and every other employment situation in our government. We will continue to monitor activities in every department, and we will make sure that we do not allow abuse. We do not have people that are verbal or abusive. We will not allow...

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Guitard): Time, Premier. Last question.

**Mr. Harvey** (Carleton-Victoria, L): Mr. Speaker, yes. Well, they still do not know. But in relation to the Premier's answer, the RCMP investigation was brought up by the Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries. You are the side that brought it up, not us. It was mentioned...

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Harvey** (Carleton-Victoria, L): Check your transcripts. Check your transcripts from the other day. The Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries actually brought up that the RCMP is investigating this matter, so do not try to hide it. Do not try to sugarcoat it. This is a serious matter. Is it acceptable, though, that a minister of the Crown is abusing people who work for the province, the road crews that work hard every day? It is just shameful. And the Premier is standing up and saying: It has been looked after. Well, nothing is public, Mr. Premier. Nothing is out there. So will you come clean with the people of New Brunswick on this issue? Is there an RCMP...

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Guitard): Time, member. Time, member.

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**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the only—the only—issue around an RCMP investigation was the CUPE article that was in the paper—that comment. We have not been contacted by the RCMP. We have not been told about an investigation, so we are not familiar with any of that activity.

But what we did do was deal with it, Mr. Speaker, and we dealt with it quickly. So the idea that there is something here when there is not... We do not have anything to hide here. I cannot disclose the actual actions that were taken due to privacy. I have said that now probably four or five times, and the member opposite would know that.

Mr. Speaker, if the RCMP chooses to investigate something, maybe it will let us know or maybe it will not. It will go through the process that it does and will not be telling us about that. The only thing that I have ever seen on this is what was in the paper, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Guitard): Question period is over.