

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



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CONTENTS

IMMUNIZATION

Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Higgs
Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Higgs
Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Cardy
Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Cardy
Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Cardy

TOURISM

Mr. J. LeBlanc
Hon. Mr. Gauvin
Mr. J. LeBlanc
Hon. Mr. Gauvin
Mr. J. LeBlanc
Hon. Mr. Gauvin

BUILDINGS

Mr. Horsman
Hon. Mr. Higgs
Mr. Horsman

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

Mr. Horsman

Hon. Mr. Higgs

Mr. Horsman

Mr. Horsman

Hon. Mr. Higgs

Hon. Mr. Higgs

BRIDGES

Mr. Austin

Hon. Mr. Oliver

Mr. Austin

Hon. Mr. Oliver

BUILDINGS

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Higgs

FLOODS

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Carr

NURSES

Mr. D'Amours

Hon. Mr. Holder

Mr. D'Amours

Hon. Mr. Flemming

Mr. D'Amours

Hon. Mr. Flemming

STUDENTS

Mr. C. Chiasson

Hon. Mr. Cardy

Oral Questions

[Original]

IMMUNIZATION

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, we believe the inclusion of the notwithstanding clause in Bill 11 is a step too far. The notwithstanding clause strips people of their individual rights and freedoms under the *Charter of Rights* and the *Human Rights Act*. It has never happened before in New Brunswick's history, and we do not think it should happen now.

We are not alone, Mr. Speaker. The *Globe and Mail* has weighed in, suggesting that this could make things worse, and the *National Post* has made a similar point, saying that an unintended consequence here is that the anti-vaxxers have made New Brunswick their primary battleground. The minister might welcome the attention that it will bring, but we would prefer just to get more kids vaccinated, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Premier. Will he remove the notwithstanding clause and let this House vote on an amended bill for vaccinations?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question. I think the whole purpose of this exercise on vaccinations is to recognize how important it is to our students and to health in our schools, and that is the reason it is a free vote. A free vote, when it is in the Legislature as it is today, can be amended by anyone here in this House. I think that as we move forward with this debate on the vaccination policy... The bill is forward, and everyone here can offer to amend that bill. I would assume that if the member opposite feels that strongly about it, the Liberal Party will indeed do just that, and then we will vote on that, Mr. Speaker. It is a free vote. It is our conscience. It is for the health of our kids, and we should treat it that way, not as a political football but as a health issue that we need to address. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, it has been a political football and a little bit of a hot potato for the government. The Premier has said that he has received legal advice that this clause needs to be included, yet he had previously introduced a bill that died on the Order Paper without the notwithstanding clause. Did the legal advice that he received change? I would ask the Premier this: Is he willing to table here in the Legislature the legal advice that he received?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, that is a fact. We did receive the legal advice that in order to address all issues related to human rights, it would be required as a notwithstanding clause. You know, there have been differences of opinion on that in the legal sector, but I guess one would not be surprised that there would be differences of opinion in the legal world. However, we table

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

it based on legislation requirements and the advice of our Attorney General's office, because that is what we do in government.

Again, I go back to the policy. We have a bill forward. Bills have a habit of getting amended, and I would suggest that any party here is able to provide that amendment. It will be a free vote, and we will vote on it. And it will be what it will be.

As for as our advice, yes, that could be available but it would be... Our bill reflects that advice that we received. Thank you very much.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): I take it then that the advice has changed, because the bill that came before, in the last session, did not include the notwithstanding clause. Now, we have the same bill before us, and in order for that bill to be introduced, it had to be written off and signed off by the Attorney General's office. So I take it that the advice did change, but I know he said earlier that the advice from the Attorney General's office had changed and that he now needed to do it this way.

When this matter came before the law amendments committee, Mr. Speaker, education officials were unable to provide data with respect to how many kids were being vaccinated and whether we had achieved herd immunity levels in the province. Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Premier this: Has any progress been made in terms of the data that shows how close we would be now to herd immunity, and are there regions of the province that have lower vaccination levels? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the member opposite for the chance to answer this question around something that has obviously received a lot of attention. I will reiterate the Premier's comments about how, in looking for support for this bill from all sides of the House, I am very open to discussing with honourable members ways to improve it. I have had good discussions about areas such as vaccine education in schools, which some members have raised, and other areas. Let's make this a collaborative process and put New Brunswick out in front on a public health issue that is currently dominating media around the world.

When it comes to the reports, the honourable member mentioned the committee's hearings in the summer and facts and figures. Of course, in schools, every year, by definition, one twelfth of our population is new, and for several months after the school year starts, for obvious bureaucratic reasons, we cannot get records for those kids with regard to their vaccination requirements and whether or not they met them. I am very happy to provide up-to-date figures for any members who are interested. Just drop by and chat with me any time you want. I am happy to share that information. Thank you very much.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): We are also starting to see a number of experts weigh in on this issue and on whether it is the right approach for New Brunswick. We are talking



Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

about people who are very much pro-vaccine, as we are, and who are interested in seeing more children getting vaccinated. Dr. Noni MacDonald is one of the country's leading pediatricians and vaccine advocates. She says that this legislation might be too simple an approach and that the real answer would be more education and more resources.

Does the minister agree with this comment on education and resources? If so, will he commit to providing those resources to ensure that the legislation and the policy are monitored and enforced and that people know about the benefits of vaccinations?

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thanks to the member opposite for the question. Again, I will be very happy to work with honourable members on elements such as that. But I would argue here that this needs to be a two-track approach because education around vaccines has been shown not to be sufficient.

I have certainly read the comments from Dr. MacDonald and some others. But we have seen, from public health experts around the world who are facing actual outbreaks of measles right now, which are actually killing people in countries, including those like Switzerland—of course, there are horrifying outbreaks in Samoa, where dozens of schoolchildren have been sent to early graves because of anti-vaccination movements—that we are facing a difficult moment.

This is no longer a question of just reminding people of something that is important and that we have always known is important. This is about a new threat from an organized group of people, funded by billionaires, spreading misinformation for reasons that I will allow them to get into, as they certainly have done with their many communications to many of the honourable members.

We need to make sure that we have both a mandate to protect our children and education to show why it is important. Anytime you talk about making something a mandate, I take that very seriously. We do not want to restrict liberties. We want to protect our kids. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Another person who weighed in is the director of the Centre for Vaccine Preventable Diseases at the University of Toronto. He, as do most of us, supports getting more kids vaccinated, but expresses concern that such a heavy-handed approach with the notwithstanding clause can create more distrust of government and, more importantly, health officials. How would the minister respond to that?

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): I thank the honourable member for the question. Absolutely, we are on the cutting edge of a new discussion around a public health area. I think that 10 years ago, most of us could not have imagined that we would even be having this conversation.

Oral Questions

Absolutely, there are different perspectives and certainly the one that the honourable member has just shared. I have read it. I have heard a lot of discussions about the concerns over the use of the notwithstanding clause. That is why I welcome opportunities to discuss with any members of this Legislature ways to make sure that we have a vaccine mandate and a vaccine education bill that properly protects our children in our schools.

Let's remember, that is what we are talking about. We have talked about issues around rights and so on. Today, in New Brunswick, I have had contact with many parents whose children cannot go to school because their children are immunocompromised because they are suffering from cancer and other diseases. They cannot go to school because of concerns about known anti-vaccine children in the classrooms that they would be going to. We are going to stand up and protect the rights of those vulnerable kids, and we are going to work with members of this Legislature. I am looking forward to working with all members. Let's get a bill that protects kids and make sure that we move ahead with vaccines mandates. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TOURISM

Mr. J. LeBlanc (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L): Mr. Speaker, there is more bad news for tourism in this year's capital budget. This is one of the real opportunities for economic growth in New Brunswick, but unfortunately, this government just does not get it.

Earlier this year, we saw a huge cut to tourism, which leaves us unable to compete against Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island for tourism dollars in the future. Now, the capital budget yesterday sees further cuts. Overall, these cuts are up to \$3 million from the department's capital budget and include almost \$6 million in strategic infrastructure. Can the minister inform the House today as to where these cuts will be felt and how this is going to help the province grow its tourism industry?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gauvin (Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this question. Listen, as for the capital budget, this is what was proposed for this year. However, we always keep some money aside in case some sustainable projects come along or some investments are needed.

For example, last year, in the riding of the member for Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, we worked on his top priority. This project was not initially planned, but we thought it was a good idea, and it worked. There were 67 000 more people.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

So, if there are projects we believe are sustainable, we will support them. However, one thing that we will not do is to promise millions before these projects are in place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. J. LeBlanc (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L): Like the bridge, Mr. Speaker.

As we have seen in the four-year plan, massive cuts are proposed for the next four years in the capital budget.

[Original]

The province owns and operates a number of tourism facilities, as we know, from Parlee Beach in my riding to Herring Cove in Charlotte County to Mactaquac and to Mount Carleton, to mention just a few. Which of our tourist attractions are going to suffer from these cuts?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gauvin (Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): None, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

[Original]

Mr. J. LeBlanc (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L): We will have to wait and see, and we will remember that.

Yesterday, the Tourism Minister was boasting to the media that he was the special one. He was out in the rotunda boasting about getting a tiny fraction of the money that it is going to take to actually get shovels in the ground to build a new bridge in Lamèque. It looks as though the trade-off at the Cabinet table was to abandon the Tourism Department yet again. It appears to be all about his political survival. When is the minister going to start standing up for the tourism industry in this province?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gauvin (Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that the prayer is finished, but...

[Original]

Oh, my God.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

I cannot believe that someone could think that we would do something like this. Making such a statement means that the member opposite would do something like this.

We will never use tourism funds to pay for something else. Once again, yes, the Shippagan Bridge will help tourism, since we need infrastructure that is in good condition. However, with regard to budgets allocated to tourism, I guarantee you that we will support those projects that are sustainable. However, there is one thing we will not do: We will not throw money in prematurely.

[*Original*]

BUILDINGS

Mr. Horsman (Fredericton North, L): Mr. Speaker, it was very disappointing to see no mention of the Centennial Building in yesterday's capital budget. Thanks to the shortsighted policies of this government, this building, which was to become a centrepiece of downtown, has now become an eyesore for our capital city. Looking at the capital budget, it does not appear that government is going to do the right thing and restart a project that was going to save taxpayers millions of dollars and would have created 800 to 1 000 full-time jobs.

You have four ministers representing the capital area. Are they not standing up and saying anything? Can the minister please update the House on what is happening with the eyesore that you have created a block away from the Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think we were clear at the beginning. We looked at projects, and we looked at sustainable projects. The previous government had a building sitting empty over there with no real plan. Those members just said: Well, we will figure it out. There was no real plan. The Centennial Building was just an added feature.

What I am pleased to talk about here today is that there is a plan. There will be an announcement very soon, and I would say before Christmas. It is a real plan. It utilizes the assets here in this city, because what we are doing is encouraging the private sector to get involved in helping to build our economy. We are encouraging taxpayers to pay less, because they have paid enough already. But that group of people over there cannot get that into their heads.

Mr. Horsman (Fredericton North, L): We did have a plan, and we had already spent \$16 million in taxpayers' money on that plan, which they just threw away. Also...

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

(Interjections.)

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

Mr. Horsman (Fredericton North, L): The Minister of Environment and Local Government was proud at the announcement, standing there as he did at the Fredericton airport. Again, we had a plan, and it was moving ahead.

What about the tendering process? One local developer has gone public with the details on his bid for the building, in part because he is frustrated that the province has not moved on this project. There could be other bidders wondering what is going on. What is the delay? You have already cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars in cancellation costs on this project. What is being done? Is nothing going to be done on this project? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think I just answered that. But do you know what is different about the tendering process? I am not in the middle of it. That is what is different about this. We are letting it follow a course, and may the best bidder win. That is the goal, because that is what is different.

When those members talk about a plan, there was a very singular plan that was a common focus of the previous government and that was saying: How much can we spend, where can we spend it, and how fast can we tax you to pay for it? That was the depth of the plan—job creation through tax creation. What a poor plan.

Mr. Horsman (Fredericton North, L): Well, Mr. Speaker, it was a great plan, and it would have saved the taxpayers of New Brunswick over \$240 million in this province.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Horsman (Fredericton North, L): No, he is not in the middle of it because it is not in his riding.

The local developer has gone public with details of his bid, and he does not include a new courthouse in his plans. As the Attorney General is well aware, there have been numerous problems with the courthouse in Fredericton. It is falling apart. It is not safe, and a new courthouse is needed. My question is this: Is there any money in the capital budget for the new courthouse in Fredericton? If we do not get a direct answer to this question, we can only assume that the answer is no. Which is it, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we are working on the courthouse. But do you know what it is? It is not a case of saying: Oh, you got one, so I want one. We will get another one.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

That is like the philosophy behind Cannabis NB. The philosophy... How many of those do we want in the province? Well, Cannabis NB said 13, but, no, let's have 20 because I need one here and I need one there. That is why it is in the mess it is in.

We are working with the Attorney General's office. We are working with the judges. We are working on a solution on the court that fits New Brunswick and fits this province. But do you know what it is?

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): It is a solution that is right for Fredericton, is right for the region, and is right for the demands of the region.

There is no innovation that ever came from the other side of the House other than saying: How fast can I spend money? That is the only program that those members ever had. As far as saving \$240 million, we have said it over and over again: The budget went up by—what—15%, \$1 billion, with nothing to show for it. We learned all these things. Money was invested, invested, and invested with no rate of return. There is a different sheriff here now.

BRIDGES

Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Leader, PA): Mr. Speaker, the capital budget estimate is showing a significant decline in DTI infrastructure funding over two years that will reduce the timeliness of proper repairs to our aging roads and bridges. A \$41.8-million reduction is not good news for getting our bridges and roads up to par with normal standards unless, of course, you are the special representative from Shippagan and you are the only PC MLA along the North Shore. Then you get the \$1 million that you need.

However, the bridge in my riding of Chipman is down to one lane, and the Centennial Bridge, as well as other bridges across the province, is in need of repair. Can the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure explain how the department plans to repair these needed assets in a timely manner considering a \$41.8-million shortfall over two years?

Hon. Mr. Oliver (Kings Centre, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member, I would certainly like to address the situation to which he is referring. It was evident last year, when we presented our capital budget, that we had to make some decisions—very difficult decisions, in fact—so that our position would not be downgraded with our creditors. We have done that, and we are trying to right the ship that was left to us.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

But I will look at the capital budget for this year. We are looking at the projects that he has mentioned and others, and I certainly will bring out additional information later today. But I see our capital budget... If you look at the budget that was presented yesterday by the Minister of Finance, actually, our infrastructure budget has risen from last year so we are able to make sure that some of the projects that we deem necessary will be done. We will be doing them this year. Getting it done, that is what we are doing—doing the right thing.

Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Leader, PA): Well, Mr. Speaker, they are certainly getting it done if you are a blue member from Shippagan and you are special. You will get it done with an extra \$1 million. But the reality is that there are bridges all across this province that are not getting done. I can think of two bridges in Coles Island that have been down to one lane for many, many years. I am looking at the bridge in Chipman. I am talking about the Centennial Bridge in Miramichi.

There is a lot of infrastructure that is crumbling around us, and a \$41.8-million reduction over two years is not going to get those done. So, unless we all move to Shippagan and use the bridge that the MLA up there needs fixed, I guess we are all out of luck. Will the minister again reiterate what he plans to do with the other bridges and the rest of the infrastructure across the province that desperately need to be fixed with the \$41.8-million shortfall?

Hon. Mr. Oliver (Kings Centre, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. And to the member, I have to ask whether he was listening to my last statement. We have not cut this year. We have actually had increases in our infrastructure budget. We will be making repairs, and we will be showing you exactly what we are doing with our infrastructure in the coming moments later today. I would ask the member to wait, and he will be rewarded with some of the information he has asked for. Certainly, we are going to do the right things. We know that we have needs. We want to repair the needs that we have, and then we can build on that going forward in the future.

[*Translation*]

BUILDINGS

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Finance tabled the capital budget, I was very disappointed to find it made no provisions for renovations at the Memramcook Institute. This institute is the heart and soul of Memramcook and an important priority for residents there.

The importance of the institute goes beyond its reputation in the beautiful valley. It has great cultural significance for Acadians, New Brunswickers, and other people. However, the history of the building is not the only reason renovations are a priority. The municipality



Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

plans to turn it into a community centre. Also, people want to resume their tenancies, but no one wants to sign a lease before renovations have been completed.

The government has already invested enough money to cover half the renovation costs. Could the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure tell me if any funding is planned this year for this important capital project?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the practice of the previous government, which we talked about earlier today... Certainly, the \$40 million that was designated for the Memramcook Institute did not have any real plan. It was just: Oh, we will spend the money and hope for the best. It is not different than what we have seen in the cybersecurity building. It did not have any real plan to put tenants into it, Mr. Speaker. We will just build it, and we will move the M.O. So we build it, the government pays for it, and then we lease it to government people. I mean, Mr. Speaker, what kind of a plan is this?

In relation to the institute, we value it as well. We know the critical nature of it, and we want to see it utilized for a purpose that is meaningful to New Brunswick and meaningful to the community and that really has a long-term benefit. And that is the goal, Mr. Speaker. We have said to others to bring us a plan of what we can actually utilize that building for, because one government after another, for years, has said it was going to put money into it with no long-term plan, Mr. Speaker. We are building for the future, not just for the next election. That has been our goal. So, let's find that. Let's find that real plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

FLOODS

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, it was not \$40 million that was planned to be invested. It was closer to \$27 million, and half has already been invested. There was a plan that was made with the community. I would love to work with the government to make this happen. There was a plan.

My next question is actually regarding freshwater flooding in Sackville, which has been getting worse because of climate change. The town of Sackville has been working to address the flooding issues for several years and has built a system of retention ponds that serve as a giant bathtub to hold freshwater when we have extreme rain events, which are becoming more frequent because of climate change.

The challenge the town faces is that DTI controls the drain for that bathtub. The town of Sackville needs DTI to replace an aboiteau in order to help these floodwaters drain out of



Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

the town. This is a required piece of the town's plan to prevent freshwater flooding. Can the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure tell me whether there is money allocated in this year's capital budget to replace this aboiteau on this vital piece of infrastructure that protects New Brunswickers?

Hon. Mr. Carr (New Maryland-Sunbury, Minister of Environment and Local Government, PC): I realize that the member opposite asked the Minister of Transportation to speak about the capital budget, but this does intricately relate to the work that has been done through the Environmental Trust Fund process with the community as well. As the minister stated just a few questions ago, he will be releasing more information on the capital budget in the near minutes or hours. We will wait for that.

I do join the member opposite in agreeing that mitigation in our communities is important. Sackville is no different. The Tantramar region in general is no different for the needs there. Our Climate Change Secretariat has worked with over 50 communities up to this point, Mr. Speaker, helping them adapt to climate change mitigation and getting their plans in place so that we can invest in the future and help these communities curb destruction from these major floods and storms that we have here in the province. It is important to us, and I reiterate that if it were not for the community working with our Climate Change Secretariat and our staff with the Environmental Trust Fund, a lot of these initiatives would not move forward.

[Translation]

NURSES

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, for months and months, this government has been called upon to find ways of meeting the need for nurses in our province. One of the major obstacles preventing us from convincing new students to go into the nursing profession is, of course, the NCLEX exam, which clearly puts Francophone students at a disadvantage. Can the minister confirm the concrete steps his government will take to fix the current problem?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Holder (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not aware of anything that is unfavourable to anybody, and I will certainly take that under advisement and look into it.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): The minister's answer is a bit surprising. I think that, on the government side, ministers will have to take a serious look at their files. Francophones should not face a disadvantage when taking the professional entrance exam. Since the introduction of the NCLEX exam in 2015, the success rate for Francophone students has drastically decreased. There is a solution to this problem that will not cost anything or be detrimental to anybody. In fact, the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing created an exam to assess the basic skills required in both the nursing practise and the Canadian health care system. Will the minister have serious discussions so that this option can be implemented in the future?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Flemming (Rothesay, Minister of Health, PC): I thank the member opposite for the question. You realize, of course, that the Nurses Association of New Brunswick is a self-regulating entity that regulates the nursing profession. It is that profession that has chosen to use what is known as the NCLEX exam. I have worked with the Nurses Association and the Nurses' Union. The province is expending funds to assist in the translation of the exam, which has been done, and the preparatory materials, which has been done. We are working on this with the Nurses Association and with the school at the Université de Moncton on a regular basis to make sure that all New Brunswickers are placed on an equal footing with respect to the exam.

I thank the member opposite. It is a legitimate question. We are certainly working toward that, but you must remember that it is done in association with the Nurses Association, which is the regulatory body...

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is directly involved in this file, because he is now considering the possibility of going ahead with the translation of a system that does not work here in New Brunswick. This means Francophones are facing a disadvantage, and we cannot recruit more nurses for our province. The minister is directly involved in this situation.

The NCLEX exam is an American exam created for Americans and American society. It is therefore not focused on Canadian health contexts, and it does not respect the primary health care approach or nursing practises in Canada, which are tied to Canadian health care. The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing created an exam to assess basic skills corresponding to both nursing practises and the Canadian health system. Will the minister

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

continue to allow an American exam to be used instead of focusing efforts on the exam created by the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Flemming (Rothesay, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I met with several nurses from Vitalité with respect to this issue, and they told me, in writing, that the single-greatest impediment was the lack of translation of the preparatory materials. I said: If that is the case, we will fix it. We are translating it. We spent the money to do it in association with both Manitoba and the Nurses Association.

The member opposite knows that the Nurses Association is self-regulating. The Law Society decides who gets to be a lawyer. The Medical Society and the College of Physicians decide who can practise medicine. The Architects' Association decides who can... This has to be done through the Nurses Association, the regulatory body for the practice of nursing in New Brunswick.

But it is a legitimate question that you have raised. I am working on it with the Nurses Association, in collaboration, and I do want to thank the member opposite for raising a very legitimate and important issue. Thank you.

STUDENTS

Mr. C. Chiasson (Victoria-La-Vallée, Deputy Speaker, L): Well, Mr. Speaker, I actually have several questions, but I am going to try to combine them. My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. In a recent news report, a mother shared the painful story of her autistic child being confined to a small seclusion room when the child became agitated. We realize that there are instances when an unruly child needs to be removed from a classroom setting. It is what happens next that is concerning.

Could the minister please commit today to reviewing the procedures and protocols around this practice to ensure that the well-being and dignity of the child are protected and that, in every instance, the parents are given the proper notification? Could the minister further commit to providing the necessary resources for the proper functioning of the classrooms that are of the diverse nature that we see here in our province? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much to the member opposite for raising this important issue. Anytime we see stories about New Brunswick students having difficulties, such as the one the honourable member was referring to that appeared recently in the press, I think that all our hearts go out to those parents, to the students involved, and to the hardworking teachers, as well, who are facing issues.



Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

As the honourable member rightly raises, there are issues around classroom composition, around discipline compartment in the classroom, and around kids who have special needs, but who have not had the supports that they need. That is something that I hope we can work on with the honourable member and with people on all sides of this House to make sure that we come up with the right solutions. A lot of those ideas from teachers are reflected in the green paper that the government presented a couple of months back.

Around some of the specifics that the honourable member has asked about, there are already requirements in place that parents be consulted and be involved in the discussions around the use of any out-of-class activities when a child is taken out of the class for discipline reasons. I am very happy to look at that. That is why I have asked my new deputy minister in the Anglophone sector, George Daley, to look at Policy 322 around inclusion in classrooms to make sure that we are living up to our commitments.

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

