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December 9, 2021

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CORONAVIRUS

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, over the past 20 months, we have been living through a pandemic, and this government has confused New Brunswickers many different times about what to do and what not to do. At one point, I asked the Premier to step aside and let the experts, the people who are credible and trusted, explain what needs to happen to get beyond this pandemic. Well, the Premier does have one area of expertise. He is an engineer. And the past couple of days have been very confusing in terms of his knowledge about engineering. He talked about some of the outbreaks being caused by ventilation systems, and then he corrected himself, saying it was the ventilators. This is serious, Premier. Can you please explain what you understand about ventilators and ventilation systems?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time the Leader of the Opposition has been confused. We have had a number of items that he has gotten confused over.

I would refer to the Hansard records of my discussion about it. It was not a hospital ventilation system. It was actually treatment ventilators in a specific region. I know that the Leader of the Opposition is reacting to the media reports, but I would like precisely to have my comments reviewed in Hansard and also my comments reviewed in the scrum yesterday because there is no—absolutely no—conflict between what I said, what Dr. Dornan said today or yesterday in terms of the system, or what Dr. Dow said yesterday as well—that it was treatment that was happening. It was not the ventilation system in the hospitals, and that is exactly what I said.

I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to... He can get over this confusion. He just has to read the facts.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, we are not reacting to media reports. We are reacting to what you said. You said that an outbreak in a particular hospital, without mentioning it, was caused by the ventilation systems. That is what you said, Premier. Then you went to the media and said it was around ventilators. Who briefs you? Whom do you listen to? Like...

(Interjections.)

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Exactly, no one.

You need to read your briefings and to just not go out there and try to explain something that you have no knowledge or understanding of and to let the experts do their jobs and explain the facts.

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So, please, correct this. Were the outbreaks created by ventilation systems or ventilators?

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is a pretty sad state if the Leader of the Opposition cannot come up with more than this in the situation that we are in, in our province, dealing with the pandemic. This is sad.

Take the words. Look at the Hansard records. I am quite prepared to defend whatever I said yesterday about the systems. Also, I am quite prepared to talk about what Dr. Dornan said in terms of the system, that there is no evidence that the ventilation systems in hospitals created any of this problem but that there is evidence that there was in the process of providing patients with aerosol treatments. So personal ventilators or aspirators caused the problem, which has been addressed in both authorities. That is the point. Has the fault been found, and has it been addressed? We have been told by the health authorities that it has. That is the point. Let's talk about that.

Maybe there is something more relevant that the Leader of the Opposition can speak about, so I will stop a little early. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, do you know what is relevant about all of this? He should step aside. Let the experts—people who are knowledgeable and know what they are talking about—explain what actually has happened. What happened is very unfortunate. Nobody, including me, wants to see outbreaks in hospitals, because this is a pandemic. It is a very contagious virus.

But the Premier needed to have Horizon correct his statements. Thank God, it did because it was very confusing. And it is not the first time that the Premier has run out to the media and has said all kinds of stuff when he did not understand what he was talking about. It is confusing. The last thing we want during this pandemic is for people to be confused about what is going on and what needs to happen. Premier, will you step aside and let people who understand these things explain them?

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Given the irrelevance of the conversation that is happening right now, I am going to talk about the situation we have with the third booster shots and wanting people to get signed up.

We have been talking to pharmacies and doctors. We have a period over the next few months when we need to get thousands of people signed up and vaccinated with a third shot. We need to get ready for the Christmas period, when people and families will be



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getting together. So there is going to be a concentrated effort. We have lots of vaccines. We just need the people to put shots in arms.

That is what the Leader of the Opposition should be asking about. People need to be out there getting vaccinated with their third dose so that we can indeed keep our efficacy rates up and so that we can continue to ward off the pandemic. We have a number of new cases today, but do you know what? Hospitalizations continue to stay the same. We are at about 40 hospitalizations, with 17 in ICUs. This has been consistent for many weeks now. There was a bit of a rise, and then it dropped back down.

Those are the issues at hand—encouraging people to stay vaccinated, encouraging people to follow the rules, not to get hung up on...

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, Premier.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): What people will remember is that this Premier would never admit his mistakes. That is a lack of leadership.

Speaking of third doses, that is exactly where I was going, actually. It is written right here—written right here. When did you get your pharmaceutical or science degree? Yesterday, you said that people could get their third shot if they are not past the six-month period. If you got AstraZeneca as one of your shots, you can get your third shot before the six-month period. For Moderna and Pfizer, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that you wait six months before you get your third shot.

Again, you confused people by telling them to get their third shot now even if they are not at the six-month period. Step aside, and let the experts explain it. Can you do that for us, please?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Once again, I am looking right at the only person who is confused here, but I will not look. I will look at you, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the idea of where this information came from and what the urgency is to get vaccinated, it came from our Public Health and our Health officials. That is where it came from. The need is to get vaccinated. Getting it a little early is not a big deal, but getting it late could be. And we are concerned about January, February, and March and what can happen after the holiday season. That is where it came from. And you will see, as the pharmacies are booking, that if you are a week early, it is not a big deal, even if you are two weeks early. But if you are past the six- or seven-month period, we are concerned. The effectiveness drops off, and there is a concern about that.

We are laying out the schedule. Public Health will put that out in relation to people getting vaccinated, and there may be a call system so that people are called and told where to go

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and when to go. We need them to respond, and we need that information through all our systems. So the opposition leaders and members will also participate.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, first of all, if this is what Public Health New Brunswick is recommending, this information has not yet been made public. So, let these experts speak. They are credible, and the people of our province trust what they say and what they recommend. New Brunswickers have absolutely no confidence in what you say. You have no credibility in terms of epidemiology or anything to do with vaccine science, Mr. Premier.

Let the experts at Public Health and Dr. Russell speak and explain to the public what the instructions are, what steps to take, and why and when people should get vaccinated, whether it is their first, second, or third dose. At some point, will you understand that you no longer have any credibility and that people no longer trust you when you are talking about the pandemic or whatever?

Are you going to let Public Health take the lead role and give it a chance to really explain to people what they need to do?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is rich coming from a guy who quit in the middle of the pandemic and walked away. He walked away so that he could banter away here, just kind of at will, to make a mess out of the whole situation—a mess.

So I am confused at what the Leader of the Opposition is really thinking. Is he thinking, How can I score political points regardless of what the people think? Is that his... Because that would be the most that he could bring to the table?

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have an issue with getting people the third dose, and experts are saying that it is extremely important that we get the third dose. We are seeing this in Ontario and in Quebec now. We need to avoid this. Once again, what we need right now is to come together and do this and to make it happen because it is important for us to

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continue keeping the hospitalization rates low and even lower than they are today. So that is the purpose.

As for Public Health, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that decisions made in that context have been made continually in the same way.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Do you know who actually quit in trying to get this pandemic under control? It was the Premier, when he got on stage and did the chicken dance on New Brunswick Day. That is when he quit. The fourth wave is very, very difficult to control because of the inaction of this government over the summer to try to mitigate and to get this fourth wave under control.

If the people at Public Health did recommend this—and it is still not public—why did the Premier get up before they made it public? They are credible. They are trusted. People believe what they say. You want to go downstairs, do a scrum, and take all the credit, but you do not know what you are talking about. You are confusing people. Are you going to step aside and let the experts explain what needs to happen to get this fourth wave under control and to make people safe again?

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, you know, the only person who does not know what he is talking about is the Leader of the Opposition, who quit. He quit and walked away.

And do you know what? This Leader of the Opposition was there. He was there when the decision was made to open up the province. He was part of the decision-making process because we were working as a team, but then he quit. He quit so that he could sit over there and blabber away without any real significance.

We are still working with the authorities because we did not quit. And we are not going to quit on New Brunswick and just sit aside and not talk about the reality. We are going to deal with it head-on, and we are going to work with the health authorities to deliver the best care we can through this pandemic. I am proud to say that my people, whom I am working with every day, are not quitting, Mr. Speaker. They are stepping up once again. Thank you.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Well, the truth hurts over there. I have never seen the Premier so out of control and not really understanding and believing what he says today.

(Interjections.)

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

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): You know, this pandemic has been difficult. It has been very difficult for many of us and for New Brunswickers. There has been a significant impact from the decisions that were made to try to handle this or from the decisions that were not made to try to handle this.

We are debating a motion this afternoon to ask for an independent review of the response of the province of New Brunswick. This is just to try to understand and to get ready for a possible next pandemic, because chances are that it will happen. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier and his caucus support an independent review of the response to this pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder that the Leader of the Opposition shifted gears. The only thing that he did not do, which would have been true to form, was to ask his next question in French, because usually in the terms of changing the tone, he switches language and tries to change the narrative.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): But, Mr. Speaker, the narrative is not going to change because the fact is, he quit. The fact is, he quit and he walked away in the middle of a pandemic. He walked away in the middle of a pandemic. So, yes, I am disappointed in that because I do not feel that is leadership. I do not think that is leadership, no matter where you sit.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): No matter where you sit in the House, that is not leadership.

So, yes, it is concerning, and we have a great record in the pandemic. Our province is rebounding faster than any province, and it is first or second in most categories. We have all of that tracked, and it is readily available. But does he really want to know that? No, he wants to make a show out of it, a show to justify his role in opposition. He can oppose all he likes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, Premier.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier... I thought he had stooped as low as he could last week, but, today, he is stooping even lower. I have seldom seen anything like it. We are an officially bilingual province, and I am able to speak both official languages, so I am going to do that. I am extremely proud of being able to speak my mother tongue, which is French, as well as English.

Mr. Speaker, my question was simple, and I would like the Premier to get a grip and deal with the situation. This afternoon, we will be requesting an independent review of the government response to the pandemic. The aim is not to blame anyone; it is just to gain a proper understanding of how things were done and how we can improve. Will your caucus pass our motion?

[*Original*]

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is well aware of what the responses were because at one time, he was directly involved in all of that—until he quit.

The point is that we have all the information. We put out all the information in relation to federal transfers. The members opposite made an issue of that. Every dime of the \$2.3 billion that the federal government sent here went out across this province to help businesses and to help people—most notably, to help people survive the pandemic. We spent more in government, about \$330 million, I think the number was, and we received \$280 million from the federal government. We spent more than that, but we put money in places that needed it to help recover and to help rebound. We are proud of that. We are proud of that record.

As we have seen, there has been record interest in New Brunswick. Immigration is up by, I think, around 6 000 people, who moved to New Brunswick—a record in many, many years. We have seen investments, we have seen property values, and we have seen people looking at our province for the first time. It is an exciting time to be in New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the Premier this morning, I think that probably more than any one of us, he needs a break for Christmas. I think he is tired. It is overwhelming. It is a lot of work. There are a lot of issues that, with his government, he needs to face. When you are a micromanager, it is very complicated, and it can be tiring and difficult.

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The question is this, again. Hopefully, you will answer this one. It has been a very difficult pandemic. There have been some decisions made that were good and maybe some decisions made that were not as good. We do not know. There may have been situations when decisions should have been made and they were not made. We are not trying to blame anybody here. We want to have an independent review of how the pandemic was handled by the provincial government in terms of decision-making on all the issues. It is simple. Why can the government and the Premier not say this: Yes, we will support that, and we will make it independent as soon as possible?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the one thing the people of this province can be assured of is that I am not going to quit in the middle of a pandemic. I can speak calmly and factually and try to change the tone, as the Opposition Leader is trying to do, to show his rational side, but most times, the words do not relate to that.

But we will fight our way through this for the protection of all citizens in this province. We will ensure that our hospitals are maintained and operated safely, and we will work with the RHAs in both networks in order to make that happen. We will ensure that they work together to maximize our capability to serve people in this province, around this province, and we will work through this as long as it takes to protect the people in this province.

It is not easy. The Leader of the Opposition and I would agree, it is not easy. It is a tough time to be in this role. It is a tough time to be in any of these roles. No one else has ever experienced it as we have, and we are all tired—I admit it. But, Mr. Speaker, I will not be quitting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to ask my question in French.

Not once, but twice, the Premier confirmed that the cause of the COVID-19 outbreaks in our hospitals was connected to the ventilation systems. At a press briefing yesterday, he suddenly talked about a problem with a procedure. However, what kind of procedure was this? Are our ventilation systems not adequate? Are they not adequately maintained? Were some patients who did not have COVID-19 put in zones intended for patients with COVID-19, so-called cold and hot zones?

People in this province want to know the details and all about what happened. Will the Premier stop changing his excuses and give us the specific facts? Someone seems to know what happened, but some people seem to want to hush that up. What was the reason for these outbreaks, Mr. Premier?



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[Original]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anyone wants to keep it a secret. In fact, that is why, yesterday, I asked the CEOs to put out a message in relation to what had happened.

This is from Dr. Dornan, the CEO of the Horizon Health Network: The Horizon network confirmed Wednesday that COVID-19 spread within several provincial hospitals through the process of providing patients with aerosol treatments such as CPAP and optimum flow ventilation masks. While this is a personal ventilation, there is no evidence that our ventilation systems contributed to the spread, no evidence that hospital ventilation said Dr. Dornan, Horizon's acting CEO and President.

That is exactly what I said yesterday. The message continues: Horizon says both of the province's regional health authorities have taken steps to mitigate these issues going forward.

I think I said that yesterday, too, that they had reassured us that they had taken mitigating steps to prevent this. So, Mr. Speaker, again, the only people who are confused... I am looking at them.

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, there have been 631 new cases of COVID-19 in the past week, and all members of each of those households with a positive case of COVID-19 are, of course, required, as they should be, to isolate for at least five days. But we are talking about thousands of people who may be without income. Last week, the government voted down my bill that would have ensured that these family members have access to paid sick days while they are in quarantine. Why does the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour actually oppose paid sick days for people who are losing income while they are required to self-isolate to protect the rest of us?

Hon. Mr. Holder (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member for Fredericton South that it was our government that made changes to the *Employment Standards Act* more quickly than any other jurisdiction in Canada to make sure that nobody—nobody—lost their job due to issues related to COVID-19. We are proud of that fact. Having said that, we want to make sure that we get everybody back to work as quickly as possible in this province. We have labour shortages that we have to balance that with, but nobody will lose their job due to issues related to COVID-19.



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[*Translation*]

NURSES

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will ask my next question in the beautiful language.

Mr. Speaker, we have a shortage of around 1 000 nurses, but all the government says is that there is a program to turn more practical nurses into registered nurses. We are still approximately 1 000 nurses short.

The President of the University of New Brunswick stated to our Select Committee on Public Universities that the University of New Brunswick loses \$12 000 for every nurse that it trains, which explains why it is turning down keen students.

Mr. Speaker, while we have a shortage of around 1 000 nurses, why does the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour refuse to invest the necessary funds to train the nurses we need so that we are no longer 1 000 people short?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Holder (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Mr. Speaker, what this government is not prepared to do is to shovel out the door money that gets absolutely no results, and that was what was happening year after year after year. Enrollment is up at the University of New Brunswick, and that LPN to RN bridging program that the member opposite is ridiculing is producing 81 new RNs every year in a two-year time frame as opposed to four years.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that both the Minister of Health and I are developing a plan in conjunction with our postsecondary institutions to talk about the scope of practice and to talk about supporting everyone from a personal support worker all the way to a nurse practitioner. We are going to do that. We are going to do that in conjunction with the universities, and we are going to produce more nurse practitioners, more RNs, and more personal support workers as a result of it. We are going to have a performance-based model that actually gets results.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Leader, PA): Mr. Speaker, over the past three years, our caucus has worked very hard to ensure that our paramedics are recognized as medical professionals through reclassification efforts. During the spring of this year, a labour board ruling declared that, indeed, paramedics are medical professionals. The increase in morale for this positive ruling was palpable among paramedics, and that indirectly helps with both recruitment and retention.

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Yet despite the work that has been done, it seems that a final transfer to a new union is still waiting to be completed. Can the Minister of Finance or the Premier give us an update on the status of paramedics in relation to their transition to the NBU?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. We are still in discussions regarding the paramedics.

We value them, and they do great work. Heaven help us when we need somebody. We need them, and they are there to help us. We understand that. We understand the advanced care paramedics as well and the extra training that they have gone through.

There is a whole different level of classification now for paramedics than there was years ago. They are being reclassified with the NBU. For now, we do not have it worked out completely, but we absolutely hope to finalize it very soon.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, the outbreaks in our hospitals are not from a single case. The outbreaks are in three separate hospitals that are in three different areas. How could a procedure problem occur at the same time in Miramichi, in Moncton, and in Saint John? And where else?

Citizens without COVID-19 have contracted it once they were in these hospitals. We are still waiting for the Premier to tell us how many patients were infected. Did any deaths occur as a result of these outbreaks? Someone has to finally take responsibility for this nightmare of nontransparency. Will the Premier commit to allowing an inquiry into these health fiascos?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): You know, Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to listen to this kind of attack on our health system and this trying to find fault with the workers who have been on the front lines of dealing with this pandemic. The CEOs and the folks at the hospitals have identified the source of these outbreaks, and it was consistent. It is my understanding that it was consistent in the hospitals that we are talking about. Then, once they identified the source, they made those changes.

As Dr. Dornan has said, they found no cases where COVID-19 was acquired through any problem with ventilation systems. However, they did find these isolated carriers where they were actually treating individuals through their aspirators and such. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that at this point, I have to rely—just as we have relied on Public Health information and recommendations and just as we have relied on our health care professionals in the field and on the different professionals in different hospitals—on their having addressed and dealt with this problem. The last thing that I need right now is people fearmongering and people being scared to go to a hospital, Mr. Speaker.



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Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Bourque (Kent South, L): Mr. Speaker, 111 new cases of COVID-19 were reported yesterday. Some 45% of these cases are under 19 years of age, and 80% of the active cases in schools are in elementary schools. The day before yesterday, the Minister of Education told the media that his team was closely monitoring the situations in schools but that he was not concerned. One wonders what it will take for him to start worrying. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that parents are very concerned.

A total of over 10 500 first doses of the vaccine have been administered to children between the ages of 5 and 11 since November 26. I stress, it is only the first dose. That means that these children are still not fully protected. Clearly, we are in a race against time. Can the minister explain why he is not concerned by the sharp surge of cases in schools? Can he assure us that more will be done to ensure proper vaccinations in young children, such as vaccination clinics during the holiday break, for example? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite for the question. Obviously, I have grave concern over the rise of COVID-19. It has preoccupied me, the government, and, I believe, most members of the opposition and, indeed, the province, the country, and the world for the past two years. When we see our case numbers going up, of course, it is concerning. It is especially concerning when we know that the opposition voted down a bill that would have made sure that it was much easier to get our children vaccinated. Let's make sure that is on the record.

In the meantime, we need to continue to make sure that we bump up the vaccination rates for young people. What we are doing there, because, again, there is a little bit of disconnection here... The Leader of the Opposition is saying, No, we do not want to hear from anyone in the government, but let the folks in Public Health speak up.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Do you know what we do on this side? We stand in this House with the evidence from the experts, and the evidence from the experts right now says that the current system that we have for vaccinations is what we need. If it changes, we will listen to the experts because that is what we do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you.

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Mr. Bourque (Kent South, L): Mr. Speaker, when the minister talks about that vaccine bill, he should look to his side, to his colleagues who also voted against that bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, there were 111 new cases. Sorry, I got mixed up with my papers. It is blatantly obvious that the plan established by the minister last October was not adequate: He has certainly lost control of the situation, and the current wave of outbreaks and infections is not going to lessen. Judging by what happened in the past with the school Christmas break, the situation is just going to get worse.

So, last July, the government decreed, with the chicken dance, that the pandemic was over. We saw that it took until October 29 for a plan to be developed in the schools. What is going to happen this time? How long is the minister's vacation going to last? Will we be waiting two months to have a plan to clearly address what lies ahead? Please, Mr. Speaker, a two-month wait is out of the question. Thank you.

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite stands up and talks about child vaccinations when he voted against it. The Leader of the Opposition talks about the importance of vaccinations when he voted against them. There was one chance in this Legislature to vote to ensure that our children are protected with safe and reliable vaccines, and the majority of one party voted against it. That one party is the one that the member is representing. This side of the House will take no lessons on vaccines, public health, or public safety.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): The Leader of the Opposition was there contributing to the decision to reopen in the summer, a decision that was justified. We then moved back to new restrictions in the fall. We will continue to work with Public Health to bring forward the strictest measures that allow our schools to remain open. As we know, in the spring, the member, in his previous version of reality, said that it was terrible for schools to be shut under any circumstances. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Order. The time for question period is over.