

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**March 23, 2022**

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[Original]

**Mr. G. Arseneault** (Campbellton-Dalhousie, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As is customary when we have been away from the House on an extended break, we ask for an extension of 15 minutes on the first question period once back. I would ask for the consent of the House to do that.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Do we have agreement?

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Denied.

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, I would define what the Minister of Finance did yesterday, not as a hat trick, but as his actually scoring a goal on his own net, to be quite frank.

I listened to the members' statements this morning, and they said they have a budget that is actually responding to New Brunswick's needs. Whom have they talked to? Whom have they listened to? We have known for at least the last three years that every single budget has been designed by the Premier of the province based on what he believes are the needs of New Brunswickers. There is absolutely no specific help for New Brunswickers right now to ease the pain of the significant cost of living and the prices at the pump. Please, Premier, tell me why, when there are New Brunswickers that expect help?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I know it is tough for the Leader of the Opposition to take a budget that has it all—a budget that continues to build on the success of this province all over this province. But it is tough to take on the opposition side.

I am really proud of what our team has done and what the Minister of Finance has done. In every sector, we have looked at ways to reduce taxes, to put more into social programs, and to put more into health programs. We are seeing an economy that is growing faster than it has ever grown—for multiple generations. It is an exciting time to be in New Brunswick, and we are seeing people coming home.

In regard to the question on the fuel tax, last week, all my colleagues put together a statement that basically said that we want relief from the federal government for what we are seeing in tax increases that are going right to the pump. We have returned money to the people in this budget. As part of that request from all my colleagues... Maybe all of that will change now with the new NDP-Liberal agreement. Whether it will ever get to the public, I am not sure. Thank you.

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**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier should get out of his office and go and talk and listen to New Brunswickers, because there is one thing that has been as crystal clear as the government's track record: We cannot trust the numbers it puts on paper in every single budget, and we cannot—cannot—trust this government. There are no concrete actions and budgetary items in this budget that are going to help New Brunswickers right now to try to ease the pain of the 6% increase in the cost of living and the average cost of \$1.80 at the pump. The Premier throws out all kinds of ideas so that people can debate and argue, but at the end of the day, he does nothing to help New Brunswickers. Tell me specifically how this budget today is going to help New Brunswickers to ease the pain of the cost of living increases?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that the Leader of the Opposition did not read the budget because it has never been clearer when you look at the areas of tax reduction, when you look at the areas of money returned to the public, when you look at the areas of control on rentals, and when you look at those areas in terms of what we are doing to eliminate the ability of landlords to terminate tenancies without cause. You can go through that list and go through what money we have put into affordable housing.

But what is really exciting is that the public sector is stepping up and the private sector is stepping up. We are seeing a combined effort to return New Brunswick to the former glory days. It is an exciting time to be a New Brunswicker. We have a population growth that has not been seen in generations—45 years. We are on a roll. It is a roll that even the Liberals can sit here and talk about but not deny, because it is real. Suddenly, a few months to a year ago, we had a situation where suddenly the have-not province has it all, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier is completely out of touch with reality in New Brunswick. That is clear. It is clear, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier tells us that New Brunswickers will benefit from an income tax cut, well, hello. It will take a year—a year or 12 months—before they get any benefit at all from an income tax cut.

Meanwhile, the cost of living is rising by 6%. Groceries are becoming more expensive. They cost a fortune, and people cannot afford to pay. The price of gas at the pump is \$1.80 per litre. Meanwhile, the Premier is doing nothing to fix the problem. Government revenues from pump prices continue to rise. We will once again have a record budget surplus for the current year. Mr. Premier, wake up, talk to the people, and take action; this is a problem right now.

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[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we raised the minimum wage to help offset the cost. We went after the federal government. When I talk about our colleagues and talk about changes to the carbon tax, I will say that the carbon tax, when fully implemented, was supposed to be 30¢ per litre. We have gotten there over the past two months because of the war situation and because of the ideology that exists in the federal government. The federal government cannot look at that and say: Well, we have already achieved the restrictions required by further prices. It says: We have already achieved that, but we are not changing anything. We are going to keep hammering it to the public. We are going to keep causing them to pay more.

I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that he could make a call to Ottawa. Make a call to the new coalition government and say: You know what, people are being taxed enough in this province. We have already reached our threshold with this carbon tax thing. We have already reached it. Let's join forces. Let's talk to the coalition government and say: You guys have drained the coffers enough. People are paying every day to get to work, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, I would say that our Premier could just step aside—step aside. We will move over to that chair, and we will make the calls. We will take on our responsibilities on behalf of all New Brunswickers who are hurting right now. What you are asking Ottawa for are incremental increases, but it has been increasing. The price at the pump has been increasing significantly, and you are not doing anything to help New Brunswickers now.

(Interjections.)

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

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): This budget, on paper, may look good to some people. Actually, since yesterday, nobody has actually applauded your budget. There is nobody that I know of, other than your colleagues around you, because they drank the Kool-Aid. They drank the Kool-Aid. Talk to New Brunswickers, but do not only talk to New Brunswickers—listen to New Brunswickers. They are hurting right now. It hurts that the cost of living is 6% higher and that the price at the pump is out of control. You are not taking on your responsibilities. Act now.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we know what the province was doing when that group was here. We know that. There was stagnated employment, stagnated growth, stagnated... Costs were going through the roof. Debt was going through the roof. Who was coming back to New Brunswick? They are coming back now because they want to be part of a success story.

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When the going got rough, we saw how the Leader of the Opposition acted. When the going got rough with our COVID-19 Cabinet committee, he quit and walked away. He walked away because it was all about politics. It was not about what was right for the people.

I would say to look at every single area in our budget to see what we have done to make improvements in every single area. Whether it is education, health, social services, mental health, or tourism, we have a budget that covers it all. Suddenly, the have-not province not only has it all but also has a budget that has it all. It was an amazing feat that we could even balance it while doing it. And, Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about financial accuracy? New Brunswick is noted for being best in class.

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

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the term is, but we hear the Premier telling us all kinds of stories this morning. He blames one thing, then another: Ottawa, COVID-19, the committee, and everything that goes with them. At the end of the day, the Premier should talk about New Brunswickers' needs. They are suffering. Today, New Brunswickers are suffering. It costs more than ever to live, to buy groceries, and to pay for gas to go to the grocery store. Rents are out of control. We will come back to the rent issue later. The Premier is taking no responsibility.

If we look at the last two years, at least, we cannot trust the figures in the government budget at all. On paper, everything looks good. People will say this to themselves: Maybe the government wants to try to get something done. The reality is that the government announces spending but never does it. It does not invest in New Brunswickers. Tell us specifically what you are doing to help people.

*[Original]*

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): We never invest in New Brunswickers. Wow. That is coming from a former Finance Minister—one who prides himself on knowing how the finances work in the province—on seeing the budget with the increases. Mr. Speaker, this budget has more spending in areas of need than any single budget has had in the past. There is a 6.4% increase in Health alone. There is public sector investment in wages, and there is education, which I talked about.

Look at the numbers. Let's not talk about all the little things and the fuzzy things that he throws out, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about what is in the budget. What is in the budget are facts about us being in a position, after managing the province through a pandemic, to move forward with the most progressive budget that this province has seen in a long time. I



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am proud to be part of it with my colleagues because it is a budget that has it all. It is a budget that balances. It is a budget that invests in New Brunswickers as never before.

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

### BUDGET

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Okay, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the Premier's record. He says that he is investing more and putting more money in the budget. Last year, he underspent. At budget time, he said that he was going to be spending such and such an amount of money. However, he did not do it. He does not do it because he wants to have a bigger surplus with which to satisfy the bankers in New York. That is what he is doing.

General Government was almost \$200 million underspent last year. Opportunities New Brunswick was \$10 million underspent; the Regional Development Corporation, \$22 million; the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, \$22 million; the Department of Social Development, \$14 million; and Other Agencies, \$75 million. On budget day, he says: New Brunswickers, I am spending for you. However, along the way, during the fiscal year, he does not spend the money to help New Brunswickers. He does not do it. We cannot trust the numbers. We cannot trust this government. Please step aside.

(Interjections.)

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): We are talking about last year's budget in a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. I understand why. I can understand the reason the opposition does not want to talk about this budget. I really can. Back when we were in a pandemic and the Leader of the Opposition was there as part of it, he knew the uncertainty of those times. He knows all about that. However, he quit, so there is not much that we can talk about on that.

He quits just when it gets tough to make the decisions that are best for New Brunswickers, Mr. Speaker, because his decisions would be about what is best for his political future. We have a budget here that we, as New Brunswickers, can now afford without adding more taxes, without going out and putting more of a burden on people, and, in fact, by bringing taxes down—absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, I would welcome questions to any of my colleagues from the opposition on this year's budget, because this is 2022. The budget was yesterday. Maybe he has not had time to read it, because there is a lot of stuff there. I encourage him to do so. Thank you.

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**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, we are ready to talk about this budget. However, when the government shows us the figures over the last year to look at, we cannot rely on what is being given to us. The government is underestimating its revenues big-time, and it is overestimating expenses, as highlighted by the Leader of the Opposition. How can we trust the numbers that the government is showing us?

We know that the cost of living is going up. The price at the pump and groceries—everything—is sky-high. What is being proposed to offset the carbon tax, supposedly, is to provide some income tax relief to low-income earners, but that will only come into effect in one year. The price of everything is going up now. What is the government doing to help New Brunswickers now, Mr. Speaker? With that, the government is saying that it is going to spend \$40 million on income tax reductions for 400 000 New Brunswickers. Can the government tell us how much each New Brunswicker will save under that initiative?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Thank you for discussing the budget.

The budget is great. Do you know what? It has something for every New Brunswicker, Mr. Speaker—something for every New Brunswicker—whether it is rent relief, whether it is property tax rates, or whether it is the basic personal amount and the low-income tax reduction, with \$40 million going back to New Brunswickers. He is right about that.

How about the dollar increase to minimum wage that is coming up on April 1, with another dollar in October? How about the \$3.2 billion to health care, the largest increase to health care since 2008-09? How about the \$38 million to support a health care action plan, which is a brilliant, brilliant piece of work that is going to make a difference to everybody in New Brunswick? It is already making a difference—\$38 million there. How about affordable housing and the folks in Social Development? There is the \$6.3 million for affordable housing.

You do not think that is helping New Brunswickers? You do not think that is smart money spent for New Brunswickers?

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

(Interjections.)

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

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, they want to talk about the budget. I am asking questions about the budget, but they are deflecting the questions. They stand there and just rattle off numbers. We have no confidence in their ability to follow through on any of those numbers. As I said, they are bringing in minor changes to income tax thresholds



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and providing minor relief to New Brunswickers, but they are going to wait a year to provide that relief while everything is going up right now.

I want to know how many New Brunswickers will benefit from this program and how much each New Brunswicker will receive. Again, why are we waiting a year to provide relief to these people when businesses are going to see property tax relief tomorrow? What can this government say that it is doing for everyday working New Brunswickers who are seeing cuts in the paycheques they use to provide for their families and their needs? What is the government doing for them? Can he answer the question? How much will they be receiving in this relief?

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

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what? I realize that it is foreign to the members opposite, but lowering taxes is something that helps all New Brunswickers. Lowering taxes—it is not something that they are used to. It is not something that they are used to.

They are also not used to helping out our early education system in the way that we are helping it out. In 2022-23, \$110 million is going to be invested in the early learning and childcare sector. Over the next five years, half a billion dollars will be invested in our children. How about that? How about investing to the tune of \$1 million for the continuation of the Laptop Subsidy Program and \$1.8 million to maintain access and capacity for school buildings? How about an increase to the Anglophone and Francophone educational resources to promote inclusion in the school system?

Absolutely, there is more money coming out. How about another \$9.7 million to increase the hours of care in nursing homes? That is \$9.7 million. How about the \$38.6 million to increase wages for human service workers?

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

## PROPERTY TAX

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap. Talk is cheap. We have zero—zero—confidence in this government to deliver for New Brunswickers.

Do you want to know something about the property tax reductions that it is offering for nonowner-occupied properties? This is something that it proposed two years ago but scrapped. Then, last year, it got jacked-up property values, so now property owners who are seeing 40% increases are going to see small decreases this year. They will still be paying more. So how much more is this government going to be raking in this year in property taxes?

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Do you know what? With this, the cap that it is putting on for rent control, and the reduction of the double tax, nobody is happy. Only this government can get that wrong. It cannot make anyone happy. It is not listening to New Brunswickers. It is not listening to New Brunswickers. How much more are you going to be earning this year in property tax revenues?

(Interjections.)

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I want to do a little history lesson here about the double tax, because we started these changes years ago, in 2014, and then that was canceled in, I think, 2016-17 and withdrawn throughout.

(Interjections.)

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): There is one thing that is pretty consistent across the hall, Mr. Speaker—never reduce taxes. Tax to the hilt. That is the mode. Now, you are right. There are increased assessments. And do you know what we did? We put it in the budget. Look at the increased spending in this budget. Do you know what? We hear some real estate folks and some landlords talking about how they are not happy. Guess what! In the last year or two, their equity in their buildings has gone up by 20% or 30%. They now have a debt-to-equity ratio lower than they have ever had. So, do you know what? There is a balance here. There is a balance between saying it is right to invest in New Brunswick because the taxes are right and it is right to look at us and say, We have a government that is stabilized, because it is spending money when it has it but it is not going to tax us into oblivion.

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

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, this is their plan for trying to get more affordable housing and to get rent under control. The property owners, the landlords, got, on average, a 42% increase in their assessments last year—42%. They will get a 16% decrease of the double tax this year. Tell me how that alone is going to help to reduce the cost of rent? Explain that to me, Premier. There is nothing in there that is going to guarantee that. Plus, by reducing the double tax, it will actually increase investment from outside because they will make more profits. They will make more profits. Second, there is \$6.3 million in this \$13-billion budget for affordable housing. That is peanuts. For people who are struggling, rent has gone up by \$300, \$400, \$500, \$600, \$700, and \$800 per month over the past year. The government is doing nothing about it. Help them out.

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen record investment in new housing starts in the province unlike ever before—ever before. What do we hear from investors? That our tax is incomparable to the Atlantic Region around us. Our tax, which has been famously dubbed “the double tax” is not comparable. So we said: Okay, we are going to start reducing your burden of taxes, but we expect better results. We expect more housing starts. Many of them said, You know, if I have stability in my future costs, because we build these for 25 or 30 years, then I can start investing more. That is what they tell us, but they need stability. They cannot have another government come along and say, Well, we are going to tax you more. Then how do they invest for 20 years?

We are on a roll, Mr. Speaker. Look at the provincial numbers—a record population, record housing starts, a record number of immigrants coming to our province. Everywhere you look, we are setting new records because people are seeing New Brunswick once again for the first time.

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

## HOUSING

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, last week, I had a disabled constituent in my office who is being renoevicted at the end of this month. She has nowhere to go because she cannot find anything affordable. She was living in an affordable apartment, but she cannot find anything on the market. She has had to go to her church to put her up in a motel until she can figure out what to do.

We are losing, by some accounts, 1 000 affordable units per year in this province. The waiting list for subsidized housing has shot up from 5 000 households to 7 000 households, yet the Minister of Finance, in his budget yesterday, announced—what?—\$6.3 million to increase affordable housing. He has got to be kidding. He is allocating so much money for a new jail and tens of millions of dollars in tax cuts. How many units, how many households, will he take off the waiting list of 7 000 with that...

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

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would be more than happy to answer that question. The Greens have taken an interesting tactic here today. We have acknowledged some of the struggles that people have had here in New Brunswick, and we are reacting to those.

What the member opposite needs to look at is that over the past two budgets that this government has put forward, we have increased the housing allotment by 20%, to a total of



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\$119 million—\$119 million. When you look at the investments that have been made right across the province... I have been to a number of different units, actually. A number of my colleagues and I looked at Rising Tide's last building, a partnership with Crossroads for Women, which included 30—30—residents. Again, that is actually going to house people who are in difficult situations. So, Mr. Speaker, I could go on about the number, this \$119 million...

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

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, this is a crisis, a crisis in affordable housing. The last time we had a crisis in affordable housing, we had the New Brunswick Housing Corporation to lead the charge, and it did so effectively. But it was absorbed into government at the turn of the millennium, and we have gone backwards. Its purpose, in law, is to cause steps to be taken toward the construction and provision of more adequate and improved housing accommodation, but it has not done so in a substantive way for more than two decades.

To think that tax cuts will reverse declines in affordable housing is pure whimsy. It is magical thinking, Mr. Speaker. There are cranes going up all over Fredericton every other month that are building new housing, but it is not affordable—unaffordable.

Will the Premier extract the New Brunswick Housing Corporation from the Department of Social Development, staff it, and mandate it to lead the charge once again to grow the supply of affordable housing in this province so that New Brunswickers can exercise their right to safe, secure, and affordable housing?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is a 10-year plan for housing here in New Brunswick that is going to create 1 200 new units in those 10 years. In the first 3 years, there were 151 units. This province is on track and will meet that number of 150 units.

What the member across the way forgets to mention—and probably purposely forgets to mention, because it is a good news story—is the \$119 million that we are putting into affordable housing here in the province. He also forgets that we are putting \$5 million into homelessness. Since 2019, we have taken nearly 800 people off the streets—people who were at risk.

The member opposite forgets to mention that the Canada Housing Benefit, which is a cooperation between the provincial and federal governments, has helped almost 1 000 people put money directly into their pockets to help them with affordable housing. Those are 1 000 people who are directly being helped...

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

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### PROPERTY TAX

**Mr. Austin** (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Leader, PA): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to see a 50% reduction in the double tax over three years as part of the budget release. We have pushed for this move for several years with the understanding that, in time, it will lead to an increase in supply for housing and help to alleviate the housing crisis that we are facing in this province. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Can the minister tell us exactly how the reduced percentage will break down annually leading into the third year?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Yes, and thanks to the member opposite for the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is going to bring it down annually at 16% per year. It is 16.65% per year over the three years to a total of 50%. What it will end up costing us when this has matured is about \$112 million per year, which, once again, is going back into the hands of New Brunswickers. That is \$112 million that is going back into the hands of New Brunswickers.

Once again, there are all sorts of great things in this budget. I will take just a minute here. There is \$3.3 million to support expanded enforcement efforts in combating drug-related crime. A lot of that is in the rural areas. We absolutely need that. There is \$6.9 million for the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture.

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): There you go. That represents a 26% increase in the department's budget. When nonrecurring COVID-19-related spending is excluded, it is 26%. That is an amazing amount of money, and that is going to be coming back with new visitors and new programs for the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture.

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

[*Translation*]

### NURSES

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L) : Mr. Speaker, this government easily manages to make announcements and do nothing afterwards.

A few days ago, the government announced that it wants to solve the problem of the shortage of nurses. Over the next five years, given the number of nursing positions that are already vacant—1 300—plus 41% of the 8 000 nursing positions, we will need 4 580 nurses in New Brunswick.



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With the plan that has been announced, if all 366 positions are to be filled, it will take 12 and a half years to solve the problem. This government understands the issues. It puts off the problem again and again. It will no longer be in power. The problem will have to be solved when we are in government. It will take 12 and a half years to solve the problem of the shortage of nurses. How can you justify that?

[*Original*]

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

**Hon. Mr. Holder** (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

(Interjections.)

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

**Hon. Mr. Holder** (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is pretty rich, I have to tell you. During the whole time that this guy was at the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, what was done to increase training for nurses in this province? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. Consistently—consistently—over the years that they were in office, the enrollment in both universities declined, and they did absolutely nothing.

As soon as we took office, we sent a message to the universities stating that we wanted to work with them, but, quite frankly, we could not keep spending money on something that we were not getting results from. They agreed with us. They agreed with us, and they responded. Their enrollment, over the past three years, has consistently gone up. Now, we have a funding formula in place to give universities additional money for additional seats beyond that baseline of where we were 15 years ago.

But when the members opposite were in that department, they had two people representing that department as ministers, and they still could not get it done.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, minister. The time for question period has expired.

