

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**May 12, 2023**

### CONTENTS

#### FIRST NATIONS

Ms. Holt

Hon. Ms. Dunn

Ms. Holt

Hon. Ms. Dunn

#### ENERGY

Ms. Holt

Hon. Mr. Holland

#### GOVERNMENT

Ms. Holt

Hon. Mr. Fitch

#### PHYSICIANS

Mrs. Landry

Hon. Mr. Fitch

#### NURSES

Mr. LePage

Hon. Mr. Fitch

#### HEALTH CARE

Mr. G. Arseneault

Hon. Mr. Fitch

Mr. C. Chiasson

Hon. Mr. Fitch

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

### SCHOOLS

Mr. M. LeBlanc  
Hon. Mr. Hogan  
Mr. K. Chiasson  
Hon. Mr. Hogan  
Mr. J. LeBlanc  
Hon. Mr. Hogan

### FIRST NATIONS

Mr. K. Arseneau  
Hon. Ms. Dunn  
Mr. K. Arseneau  
Mr. K. Arseneau  
Hon. Ms. Dunn

### HEALTH CARE

Mr. Legacy  
Hon. Mrs. Shephard  
Ms. Holt  
Hon. Mr. Fitch  
Ms. Holt  
Hon. Mr. Fitch  
Hon. Mr. Fitch

### *OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT*

Ms. Holt  
Hon. Mr. G. Savoie  
Hon. Mr. G. Savoie

### GOVERNMENT

Ms. Holt  
Ms. Holt  
Hon. Mr. Holder

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Original]

### FIRST NATIONS

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A critical component of leadership is relationship building, and good relationship building starts from a place of respect. We have been worried about the lack of leadership with the Higgs government, as relationship building is clearly not in the playbook, nor is the basic respect that a government leader should show New Brunswickers. This has been clear through the delayed contract negotiations and the events of last Friday that show that respect and good relationships are missing there. It has been clear to nurses, to doctors, to unions, to Francophones, to civil servants, and now to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community that the Higgs government does not respect any of them.

It was apparent again yesterday with the disrespect shown to First Nations leaders. The Premier promised them that natural gas development would only happen with their support, but now he says that we just have to move on. Could the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tell us what steps she will be taking to show respect and to repair these important relationships?

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Thank you to the member opposite for the question, through the Speaker. As the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I want to confirm that we will be consulting with First Nations when it comes to any sort of development in the province. It is not only the right thing to do. It is our constitutional, legal obligation to do that, and it will be done. Thank you.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that answer, minister. I am hoping, then, that you can provide some clarification on the Premier's comment from yesterday that he is just going to move on without the support of First Nations. Can you help us to understand how that jibes with what you have just said?

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Thank you again to the member opposite for the question, through the Speaker. I have not been in communication with the Premier, so I cannot elaborate with respect to any sort of context in terms of what he was talking about. I can say that we are in a global crisis when it comes to energy supply. We do believe that, in light of the crisis, New Brunswick will provide an opportunity for us to close some of those gaps that are occurring right now throughout the globe.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

Those are valid points, but to specifically stand here and say that I understand or have the context with respect to his comments around the First Nations piece, I cannot clarify that. But I am here to clarify, as I said previously, that I am the minister responsible and there will be consultation, not only because it is the right thing to do but because it is respectful and it is the law. Thank you.

### ENERGY

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you for that, minister. I am going to take the comments that you made about the energy crisis because I think that it is important. We have seen that the Premier has been attempting a variety of different energy strategies to pursue TransCanada, to pursue Repsol's conversion, and to pursue paying First Nations to develop natural gas, and now he is considering hydrogen, which we are excited to hear about. It feels as though there are lots of different energy things being thrown up against a wall but none of them have support or investment from the business community. So I am hoping that the minister responsible could tell us what is the plan to develop a comprehensive energy strategy, which includes components that will support our generation, and how we will see green energy integrated into that. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and answer questions in the House. I want to welcome the Leader of the Opposition to her position, and I look forward to having many spirited debates about our bright energy future.

When it comes to the comments that were made about not seeing private-sector investment, we need to really qualify that. We have seen significant private-sector investment as it relates to our small modular reactor file. We are talking about proponents who are worldwide stakeholders that are tremendous at what they do as it relates to hydrogen and nuclear energy. We have bilateral support from the federal government.

I would say that there are a variety of items that the member opposite just talked about. If she would like, we could go through the entire question period and just break each and every one of them out. I would love to talk about just how far we are advancing each and every one of those files and how we are making sure that New Brunswick is a world leader when it comes to the future and security of energy.

### GOVERNMENT

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will take the minister up on that at some other time.

It has been a revealing week in the Legislature. My first question periods have been memorable, so thank you for that. I had been hoping to discuss matters of leadership and

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

transparency, but what was revealed this week, in addition to the missing leadership, was a lack of management by ministers. We had the Minister of Finance telling us that they did not follow the Auditor General's recommendations or best business procurement practices to award a major contract because they liked the company. We had the Minister of Education telling us that funding approvals cross his desk but that he was unaware that the department had approved Pride in Education funding and then denied it. And we had the Minister of Health being unaware of contract reductions in health services for New Brunswickers. So could the member opposite tell us what changes are being put in place to prevent these kinds of mistakes from happening again?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for that kind statement this morning, but boy, it went south after that. When she said that I was not aware, that was an inaccurate statement. I am not going to ask the member to withdraw that, but I am going to say that, from a whole-systems standpoint, it is natural that we have people who negotiate and sign off on contracts. If she remembers when Brian Gallant was in there, he did not sign off on contracts either, so there is a selective memory going on here.

You know, yesterday it appeared that the opposition had no adult supervision when it came to leadership. That was pretty obvious in the political attacks. The member for Moncton South went back to 15 years ago—15 years ago. He either has good research or... Sorry, it was the member for Moncton Centre. See, sometimes you misspeak. Mr. Speaker, I will talk to the member for Moncton Centre later.

[Translation]

## PHYSICIANS

**Mrs. Landry** (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago, my constituents informed me that the only two physicians at the Haut-Madawaska community health centre would be permanently closing their offices on July 15. People in the region are desperate, Mr. Speaker.

These two physicians serve about 4 500 people, which means that their departure leaves 95% of people in Haut-Madawaska without a family doctor. After checking with the relevant authorities, I was informed that there were no plans to bring a new physician into the northwestern part of the province in 2023, and that it would be unlikely in 2024.

Can the Minister of Health tell me what his recruitment plan is for family doctors in the Haut-Madawaska region?

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Actually, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of plans for the recruitment of physicians. Actually, we have moved quickly—we have moved swiftly—in order to do that. We created a recruitment branch within the Department of Health, and it has actually grown. It has coordinated all the recruitment with the RHAs and with long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, part of our whole budget rollout in the spring included \$10.5 million in additional funds toward collaborative practices. We have been working very, very hard, and the RHAs have been with us on this. In the northwest part of the province, there is a collaborative care practice and there are a number of doctors who, hopefully, will be working together in a form that will allow for better and quicker and more access for the people in the northwest. We continue to work hard every day to make sure that health care is available for the people of the province—the whole province.

[Translation]

### NURSES

**Mr. LePage** (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health has been asked about the recruitment and retention plan and results for several months now. The minister is defending the closure of services in the Restigouche region, such as obstetrics, due to a shortage of qualified professionals.

Yet, by last May 9, the Vitalité Health Network had only posted vacant positions for psychologists and food service technicians, but those are for the entire northern part of the province. Only two positions are for Campbellton, one a casual position for an occupational therapy aide and the other a full-time position for a facilities manager.

Can the minister confirm to us the number of vacant nursing positions in Zone 5—in Restigouche—and can he explain why no vacant positions for this profession have been advertised by the Vitalité Health Network since May 9, 2023?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that the human resource issue is right across the province, not just in the specific areas that, it appears, the opposition is going over today. That is why we have moved swiftly. We have moved decisively. We have moved in a way to recruit internationally educated nurses.

We—the Minister of PETL, the minister of long-term care, and I—have actually met with the association to make it easier and swifter and to expedite the way that foreign,

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

internationally trained nurses come to New Brunswick. Instead of having it be months and months and years before these nurses can have their credentials recognized, we will see that move quickly into a matter of weeks, Mr. Speaker. Again, we expect those results very, very soon.

We have had our recruitment team down to the Philippines—as far as the Philippines—to recruit people. They have come back with over 200 signed contracts from people who are going to work here in New Brunswick. Mr. Speaker, once again, for the members opposite to say that... Well, I will come back to that in the next question.

[Translation]

### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. G. Arseneault** (Campbellton-Dalhousie, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obstetrics services have not been provided in Campbellton since April 5, 2020, even though the closure was supposed to be temporary.

[Original]

It was supposed to be temporary. The obstetrics services were closed three years ago. I would like to ask the minister this: When can we expect it to reopen? What is his plan for obstetrics?

[Translation]

What is the plan for obstetrics?

[Original]

It is unacceptable that it is not open after three years. Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you.

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We see the strategy today. That is fine. I do not mind that.

Obstetrics is a very important part in your area. Again, when we look at some of the resources that needed to be in place to make sure that people have safe, reliable, and dependable service, we look back at some of the results of the Gallant government. It was

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

opened by the member for Moncton Centre that we can go back 15 years and start questioning people on what was done. Well, Brian Gallant never recruited any doctors or nurses. The results are clear. He put money into UNB, and do you know how many more nurses were graduated because of that contribution? Zero. And you need nurses to have obstetrics. If you do not have the nurses, obstetrics is hard to do.

Mr. Speaker, we can challenge the new Leader of the Liberal Party and ask her whether the decisions that Brian Gallant made with respect to health were some that were advised by her or whether she condoned them.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. C. Chiasson** (Victoria-La Vallée, L): Mr. Speaker, we established this week that women in my riding who need Pap tests and who do not have family doctors have nowhere to go. People having a mental health crisis have nowhere to go. People who need hemodialysis have to travel up to an hour, at their own expense, and often at the expense of their health, to get this vital medical procedure. People who need oncology services often face the same dilemma.

The Minister of Health likes to boast about all the wonderful things he achieves in health care. Many of our people live in small rural communities. We hear the Minister of Health talk about everything he does, but there are still enormous gaps in rural health care. What does the minister suggest I tell my constituents who have no access to health care?

*[Original]*

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

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I appreciate the question from the member from Grand Falls. It is interesting that the member from Grand Falls was asking: Why are you so political? Now, here, we are seeing attacks again. I do not know how that question would be graded. We saw the member for Kent South get up and be so political. He made such personal attacks against some of our colleagues. Then, again, trying to look sweet and innocent does not work. He was part of the Gallant government. He was there. He was there when Gallant ignored health care—ignored health care. He put money into things that had no expectation of a result. There were mandate letters that never went out.

Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard, roads to no end. I am not seeing leadership over there at all. On this side, I see a vision that is clear and concise. It is making sure that health care is available in a reasonable time in a reasonable area...

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you, minister.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Translation]

### SCHOOLS

**Mr. M. LeBlanc** (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the 2022 report on child poverty in New Brunswick published by the Human Development Council, the Chaleur and Restigouche regions have the highest child poverty rates in our province. In Belledune, for example, the poverty rate among children is 35.7%, more than double the provincial average. In 2019, a study in the Chaleur region revealed that 1 766 children did not get breakfast every morning.

Here is my question for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: Can you explain why no children in any of the schools in the Restigouche-Chaleur riding have access to the school breakfast program established by the government?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday—and the answer has not changed—there are 50 schools in our province that do not have a food program. We are working on it. Of these schools, 19 are in the Francophone sector and 31 are in the Anglophone sector. We will continue to work on creating a food program for all our students, because one student with nothing to eat is one too many. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. K. Chiasson** (Tracadie-Sheila, L): Mr. Speaker, for the fifth year in a row, the government has not made provision for investments to finish upgrading Polyvalente W.-Arthur-Losier in Tracadie. A \$17.6-million project was started in 2015 and was supposed to take five years. This means that the over 700 students that go to this high school will have to wait even longer for new science labs, a new gym, and a new elevator.

Finishing the last two phases of the mid-life project will not only enhance the learning environment for our youth, but also add 30 years of life to this school built in 1969. Mr. Speaker, common sense dictates that the longer we wait to finish a project, the greater the cost will be.

So, will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development commit to prioritizing the last two phases this year so we can turn the page on a project that should have been completed in 2020? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Again, there are 296 schools in our province. I understand that we have already undertaken some mid-life projects to improve these schools, but we have seen our population grow incredibly quickly. We have never seen this before. So, new schools have to be built. This challenge in our province must be dealt with. I can assure the member opposite that we are going to continue working on this mid-life project, but it may not be this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

**Mr. J. LeBlanc** (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Policy 713, students and teachers at Polyvalent Louis-J.-Robichaud have shown a lot of respect for the inclusion policy for years. The teachers and students are now confused and uncertain about the possible changes. My question for the minister is this: Can he reassure us that Policy 713, as proposed, will be respected in our schools?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question. The answer is so simple: Yes.

[Original]

## FIRST NATIONS

**Mr. K. Arseneau** (Kent North, G): Mr. Speaker, yesterday morning, weeks after promising New Brunswickers that he would not open the New Brunswick fracking industry without First Nation involvement, we woke up to find out that the Premier had flown to Europe and told reporters that he just has to find a way to move on if First Nations do not consent to fracking. In response, the Mi'kmaw chiefs said that once again, the Premier has demonstrated his disregard for Mi'kmaw rights and for the commitments he has made. Is this how things are normally done, Mr. Speaker? The Premier flies off to Europe and tells the chiefs to frack off.

Is there even a process in place for meaningful consultation—meaningful consultation—with First Nations and not consultation just because it is constitutionally needed? Does the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs think that this is an acceptable way of communicating with First Nations in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Thank you to the member opposite for the question through the Speaker. I believe that I clarified my position earlier with respect to previous questions related to this issue, but I will reaffirm once again that there is a consultation process in place. There will be meaningful discussions and consultation. As I said earlier, I am the minister responsible for the file. It will be done respectfully, meaningfully, and in conjunction with First Nations.

**Mr. K. Arseneau** (Kent North, G): You have not answered the question.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. K. Arseneau** (Kent North, G): No.

Is it an acceptable way of communicating with First Nations in New Brunswick? Mr. Speaker, is the minister even listening to the Mi'kmaw and Wolastoqi chiefs? They could not have been clearer than they were in their statements yesterday. Chief Allan

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

Polchies said, “There is no shortcut around a legal obligation to Indigenous consent.” Chief Tim Paul of Wotstak said, “This man has repeatedly gone back on his word and attempted to bend our own words against us. He is not a suitable partner for any sort of business.” Chief Gabriel Atwin of Bilijk said that it was a shocking and regressive move and that the Premier did not even have the courage to say it on this side of the Atlantic. As Chief Patricia Bernard of Matawaskiye said, “The oil man cannot be trusted to keep his word”. How can the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs defend him, and what message does the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs wish to give to First Nations leaders...

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

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Through the chair, thank you again to the member opposite for the question. If I were to stand here and actually judge every single person in this House—or even outside this House, for that matter—in terms of some of the things that I have heard him say, it would be a very sad day. I think that is applicable to a number of folks in this House. I am not going to stand here and defend anything that the Premier has said without being present to hear what was actually being talked about.

I will say this once again. I reiterate that we will have meaningful discussions with First Nations. There is a consultation process in place, which we have actually developed in our department in consultation with First Nations. We will be adhering to the law and to our constitutional obligations. First and foremost, a respectful relationship with First Nations is what we want to achieve. Thank you.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, the Bathurst regional hospital is in crisis right now with a full hospital. There are no rooms available, and we are hearing about surgeries being allocated to other hospitals and people having to travel to get their work done, as do the doctors. During committee, the Minister of Social Development confirmed that the problem there is that long-term care is really taking up all the rooms. She confirmed during committee that we would be seeing relief through some actions by her department by mid-May. We are now at May 12. We are hearing widespread reports of employees feeling the heat at the hospital. Can the minister confirm that she is going to hit that mark and that we are going to see some relief within the next few days?

**Hon. Mrs. Shephard** (Saint John Lancaster, Minister of Social Development, Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, PC): I appreciate this question from the member from Bathurst. It is, of course, very serious and very urgent. You know, the situation is compounded by bed closures in Vitalité, and it is compounded by a lack of staff in some of the areas. I can confirm for the member that work has been ongoing. The nursing home is going to be receiving more residents. Also, we have been working with

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

special care homes in order to get them licensed to take on extra higher acuity care with supports. All that work has been progressing. I am very pleased. Staff continue to advise me and update me on a weekly basis. I can assure the member that movement is already happening and that we will be seeing some relief for the Bathurst hospital. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister of Health a question about some of his comments. He said that there would be a collaborative care clinic in the northwest of the province, but, according to the throne speech, it seemed that the first clinics would be established in Charlotte County, Fredericton, Sussex, and Dalhousie.

[Original]

Could the minister clarify that? Were you referring to Dalhousie as the place for the collaborative clinic in the northwest?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you once again. There are a number of different forms of practice that doctors have here in New Brunswick. It can be a sole practitioner, it can be family medicine, it can be within a hospital, or it can be within a collaborative clinic. Some of the ideas that are being put forward will include all the various scopes, all the different types. I know that there are a number of doctors in the northwest who are considering various options and there are a number who are sole practitioners. I think that in the not too distant future, we are going to see quite a large family medicine practice that will allow many, many people to be seen by these doctors in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, again, we are the government that is moving on health care. We can look at the number of initiatives that we have put forward that are addressing the situation, such as the HR. Again, back in the Gallant times, in Moncton Centre...

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

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will give you a chance to fill another minute, Bruce, if you like. Sorry, Minister Fitch—Minister of Health. I am learning. I am learning here.

You mentioned \$10.5 million for a collaborative practice specifically in the four clinics that we mentioned, which strikes me as an odd contrast to the nearly \$50 million, which is identified for one jail in Fredericton. The \$10.5 million is to be spread across the four places that I have already mentioned from the speech from the throne—Charlotte County, Fredericton, Sussex, and Dalhousie—and potentially more now, from the sounds of the

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

answer that I just heard the minister give. Could you clarify how the \$10.5 million for collaborative practices will be allocated? Because even spread equally, \$2.5 million does not go a long way toward putting a clinic in place when it takes \$50 million, apparently, to try to build a jail in Fredericton. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): You know, I want to commend the new Leader of the Opposition for her first week in the Legislature. She has made a couple of mistakes.

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Yes, go ahead. But you know, Mr. Speaker, when you boil it all down... From a standpoint of the estimates, when we went through it, we went through it line by line by line. If the members opposite have researchers who can go back 15 years, that is good research—I appreciate that—or else somebody needs to clean out the newspapers in their basement. But they can go back to look at the estimates, which will explain that. There is more than just one pot of money going toward the compensation for doctors and toward setting up clinics.

I know that one of the areas we are going to look at is providing additional resources for some of the physicians by doing things such as hiring NPs and hiring some of the administration—doing some things that Brian Gallant never thought of. All he thought about was: Let's make another board, put some of our friends on that, and everything will be fine.

## **OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, New Brunswickers are proud to be the only officially bilingual province in Canada. We have seen so many times, particularly recently, that New Brunswickers care deeply about learning French in school and celebrating, promoting, and protecting the language and culture across our unique province.

[Translation]

Our team would like Bill 37, *An Act Respecting the Official Languages Act*, to be passed unanimously in the House. We have heard that changes could be made to the bill to make unanimous consent possible. That gives us hope. So, could the member opposite please tell us when we can expect Bill 37 to be debated and whether amendments will be proposed to strengthen the Act so that we can move forward together?

**Hon. Mr. G. Savoie** (Saint John East, Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to answer this question.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Original]

As a government, we are very proud of the work that has been done around...

Excuse me, I have a frog in my... My allergies this morning...

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. G. Savoie** (Saint John East, Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): A raw throat—how about that? Excuse me, my allergies are bothering me this morning, Mr. Speaker.

We are very proud of the work that has been done on Bill 37, specifically around the secretariat. I can assure the leader opposite that the work will continue, that we are actively looking at all the amendments that have been put forward, and that we will continue to work toward the harmony that we are looking for in this province from a language perspective.

Because at the end of the day, we have had 50 years of bilingualism. We have had 50 years where we have not been working together as a province. So to hear an indication from the leader opposite that we are looking toward having unanimity and working together in this Chamber on that file is good news to have. Thank you.

## GOVERNMENT

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): I am reminded of what the clerk of the committee warned me about on Monday—that it is called question period, not answer period. It is clear.

Our team has asked specific and sincere questions about the progress, or lack thereof, on specific commitments that the government has made, on figures that it has presented, and on programs that have been introduced. The persistent absence of answers to these questions breeds a cynicism that I see growing at an alarming rate in the people of New Brunswick.

But I will not give up hope. I firmly believe that this Assembly and politics can and should be a force for good and a vehicle for positive change in our province. Our team will continue to show up each and every day to ask the questions that New Brunswickers want answers to and to defend the priorities and interests of all New Brunswickers.

(Interjections.)

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

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): I know that there are members opposite who feel the same way. So my question is: Who is with me?

**Hon. Mr. Holder** (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I thank the member opposite for that question because there are a lot of great things happening in this province right now. Look at the fact that our Premier is in Europe right now. The port of Belledune and the port of Rotterdam signed an agreement. That happened in large part because we had an adjustment committee in place after the smelter up north closed. We hit the ground running.

Mr. Speaker, we have made strategic investments in the port of Belledune. Do you know what? That is in conjunction with the strategic investments that we are making in the port of Saint John. That is because this party on this side of the House—the party of Flemming, Hatfield, Lord, Alward, and Higgs—believes that New Brunswick is strong and that all regions of this province are strong. We ask the Liberal Party to get on board. I hope that it gets on board. If it does not, it will fade away like a summer day on Labour Day weekend.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you, members. The time for question period has expired, unfortunately.