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June 6, 2023

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EDUCATION

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the issue that continues to preoccupy New Brunswickers from Bathurst to Saint John is the comments that the minister and the Premier have made about Policy 713 and the people it protects.

[Translation]

We keep receiving messages from people throughout the province, like David C., of Rothesay, who says he is distressed, appalled, and offended.

[Original]

His comments stem from those that the members opposite have made, including insulting and dismissing a Saint John mother of a trans student and disrespecting a Grade 11 student who is gay.

[Translation]

Members were argumentative with a parent school support committee group and the media, among others.

[Original]

On behalf of the students, parents, and members of the two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, plus community, will the members opposite please apologize for their erroneous statements and reassure New Brunswickers that they have learned from this?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. We are going to continue to work toward improvements to Policy 713. We have met with different groups, and I have met with different individuals. I will not get into the nature of the discussions here. I am looking forward to moving forward and ensuring that we continue to protect the rights of the LGBTQ+ community as well as affirming the rights of parents in our society. They are our stakeholders and our partners, with their children, in our school system. Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two follow-up questions for the Minister of Education. Can he confirm when he will tell us what is happening with Policy 713 and

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whether the advice of the Attorney General's Office was sought on the changes being proposed?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, again, to the honourable Leader of the Opposition. We are going to continue to protect the rights of this vulnerable community, as we have been doing. There will be no changes to that. I am hopeful that we will bring our improvements forward this week, hopefully by midweek. Yes, we have consulted with constitutional experts. Thank you.

[Translation]

ENERGY

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is Canadian Environment Week.

[Original]

With the forest fires that we have experienced around the province, the climate crisis is screaming to be acknowledged and to be taken seriously. The cost of climate change is real, whether from fires, flooding, erosion or from our air quality.

[Translation]

New Brunswick does not currently have a comprehensive energy plan that includes renewable energy.

[Original]

New Brunswick does not currently have a comprehensive clean energy plan. The best I can tell is that, as per the commitments, one is coming in 2025, which is after the next election. Or maybe it is coming in 2023, as the Premier told folks in Europe. We hear of a secretariat and a hydrogen committee, we have a legislative committee, and NB Power has a strategy coming out. But the consumers, industry, and this government are suffering from the lack of an energy plan. Could the Premier please tell New Brunswickers: When can we expect an integrated, comprehensive, green, and sustainable energy strategy?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, there was a certain amount of the member opposite's answer in her own question, as she posed it. She went through the secretariat. She went through the issues related to developing integrated resource plans at the utility. She went through discussions about energy and our development of hydrogen plans and strategies. So she must be aware of the fact that this is an incredibly active government as it relates to walking into energy futures and making sure that New Brunswick is leading the way.

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That is very important, and it is important that the members opposite recognize that we are carrying on the tradition of the investments that they made in the small modular reactor nuclear sector. It is important that the members opposite recognize that clean energy is a commitment and has been to the point that we generate 82% of the electricity in New Brunswick through nonemitting means. In addition to that, we do not stop there. The members opposite are very aware that we have a request for expressions of interest for over 200 MW of renewable clean energy. Mr. Speaker, reports come forward, but actions speak louder than words.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the member opposite can confirm then. Can we expect that energy strategy in 2023 or 2025?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I really love how the Leader of the Official Opposition is presupposing that we will be running the government in 2025. That sounds like a vote of confidence for us in the next election.

That being the case, it is an opportunity to stand up and talk about the fact that energy strategies are very, very much being worked on over the course of this year. Whether it be an energy road map, whether it be a hydrogen strategy, or whether it be the completion or the continuation of work that we are going to be doing in the nuclear sector, the member opposite will have more than enough reports this year as it relates to the advancements that we are making.

In fact, I will be speaking this evening at the Canadian Nuclear Society event and meetings that are being held in Saint John. We have had a chance to speak to audiences all over this country and the world about how New Brunswick is an absolute leader in energy futures and how we have New Brunswick-based solutions that can provide clean energy to jurisdictions all over the world. This is an opportunity for us to come together and celebrate that, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, we are in a time when the cost of living is putting pressure on many families in New Brunswick.

[Original]

The government is taking what should be a fee to drive industrial innovation and passing it on to New Brunswick drivers to pay at the pump.

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[Translation]

Our team asked this government to help families by providing them with an expanded fuel and food benefit, but it has not done so.

[Original]

We tabled a motion to provide relief to New Brunswickers with the removal of PST on energy bills, and they are thinking about it.

(Interjections.)

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): We tabled a motion. Now, with the introduction of the Clean Fuel Standard, you have chosen to protect the big guys and stick it to the little guys. Why? Can the Premier explain why he chose to take the cost of the Clean Fuel Regulations off the big producers and pass it on to New Brunswickers?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that the Leader of the Opposition should look further to Ottawa and say: Why is the federal government doing this to our province? Why is it imposing rules on our province that are raising the cost of energy?

We have seen what has happened with the carbon tax. We have seen the flow down and the rise in prices in every commodity, and now it is happening again. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, the federal government would like you to believe that we had something to do with that. Well, do you know what? The federal government policies are imposing a new tax regime, a new fuel bar that is rising, and it is doing that commencing July 1. It is not about anything else but a change in regulation to cause more pain at the pumps and in the grocery store.

So I would think that we should pass a motion on this floor and we should implore the federal government to reduce and delay. We did that. All four provinces, including Newfoundland, put together a letter to say to the minister of energy and to Pierre Trudeau—Justin Trudeau—that we want this delayed. No response, Mr. Speaker.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): At Port Days, Mr. Speaker, last week, the Premier and I and other members of government got to hear from global leaders on the major trends that are impacting port development and growth. I was struck by the themes that many of the speakers shared. One was the

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importance of having partnerships globally as well as locally and, critically, with Indigenous communities.

Then there were the sustainability issues that are being pursued—green corridors, new equipment and technology, and reduced emissions—that many of these port leaders described. Notably, CPKC CEO Keith Creel talked about CP's commitment to reduce fossil fuel use, to adopt battery and hybrid freight locomotive fuel cell technology, and to create a legacy to leave the company and the country better than he found it. With the lack of an energy plan and in the face of an industry that is broadly replacing fossil fuels, will the Premier follow in the footsteps of these port leaders and CPKC CEO Keith Creel and commit to no new fracking in New Brunswick?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): A few weeks ago, I was in Europe and went to a hydrogen conference. We talked about the different modes of modernization in terms of fuel, about when it is going to come, and about whether it would be nuclear or hydrogen. Mr. Speaker, it is all 10 or 15 years out. Do you know what the ambassadors there told me? Do you know what the trade commissioners told me in the Netherlands? They said: We are hoping that Canada could be of some help. We are in a crisis here. The thing that really stood out is that they said they were two hours by flight from the Ukraine crisis. And here we are in Canada not helping a bit in their energy crisis. Do you know what? When you talk to the leaders in energy in France, in Germany, and in the Netherlands, they talk about a transition as we move forward.

What the Leader of the Opposition needs to understand is that there is a path. What our presentation on the energy format will bring out here in midsummer is that this is a path that not only meets sustainability but also is a reality at the same time. What we need... And there is a science conference that is underway in Saint John now. Mr. Speaker, the point is that we all have to understand the science and what is possible and to get onboard.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, with the pending vote for the third reading of Bill 38 that is scheduled to happen within the next few days, it is now clear that the Minister of Environment will not be funding his Climate Change Action Plan through the carbon tax revenue stream. The ink is barely dry on the minister's plan, yet it clearly states that the provincial government will continue to fund climate change under two streams—carbon tax revenue and the New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund. Now that the first stream has ended, has the minister secured long-term funding, until 2027, for his plan? Does he care to share what the commitment will be?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question from across the way. We do not have an exact

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in-depth plan for you today, but I will tell you about all the good things that are going on regarding the environment.

This is National Environment Week. I want to thank the many organizations within the province and across Canada that are making a difference. Our air is cleaner, and it is among the best in the country, excluding maybe the recent forest fires and other things that are beyond our control. Water quality is second to none. As we mark these special days in this week of June, I want to talk about our many accomplishments. Yes, the Environmental Trust Fund is one. The Climate Change Fund is another, with big projects coming out.

In terms of some of the organizations with Environmental Trust Fund awards, there is \$30 000 for the Meduxnekeag River Association to continue implementing action plans and education initiatives in its watershed. There is \$30 000 for Fort Folly Habitat Recovery and \$34 000 for the Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee. There is a lot of good money being spent on lots of great projects.

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, one would think that this plan was built around two revenue streams. The plan at the time was to have the Climate Change Fund be there with a certain prediction of what the revenue was going to be. I ask the minister this again: Now that the stream is not there, for the next four years, until 2027, how much does he plan on getting to complete his plan and from where?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question from across the way. These plans are ongoing. We are doing the research right now and are putting a plan in place to continue as many projects as possible with as much funding as possible.

We encourage everybody as well to get those projects in. Not all projects are accepted for the Environmental Trust Fund. Climate change goes between different departments, as you know. Member across the way, the departments are working together to get lots of great projects going. Many of them are in the northern part of the province as well. There are probably too many to list here today, but I will go over a couple that are up your way. They are all important to all of us.

In this year alone, the Environmental Trust Fund will invest \$8.6 million in environmental projects for 2023-24. Keep them coming. Get your applications in. Do not forget that the Environmental Trust Fund deadline is in November. We are looking at the Auditor General's report to make changes that may make that occur more frequently in order to help in your area as well. Thank you.

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, "Climate Change Action Plan" is an interesting title. It is the title of a report that is further reinforced by its conclusion that claims that the need for accelerated action is clear. Yet one peruses the 30 action items that are listed in the plan, and one can find over 20 references to creating blueprints,

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completing strategies, developing plans, reviewing legislation, identifying support, or conducting assessments.

It is not the language of action. It is the language of a government that has been in place for five years and is still in search of direction. It is a government that is still looking for a commitment to the cause and is thus buying time by studying and reviewing. I would argue that the first step to commitment and action is to ensure proper funding for the initiatives. Will the minister clarify how—how—he plans to secure this funding?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question from across the way. We will be working on getting the funding in place. The details are not out today, but we will certainly share them with you as soon as we have them. It does not happen overnight. It takes departments working together, and it takes governments working together as well. As you heard before, One Team One GNB. All our departments are working together for these projects.

Regarding the Climate Change Fund, the New Brunswick government is committed to being part of the solution on climate change. We have always said that, and you understand that as well. We recently released a list of the climate change projects as part of the \$47 million that is presently committed through the 2023-24 budget. We hope to see that continue with as much money as possible moving ahead. In total, 73 projects were approved for the 2023-24 fiscal year. We are looking forward to more information coming soon.

[Translation]

EROSION

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, there is a serious erosion problem along several coastal regions in our province, especially in the Acadian Peninsula. The erosion is so severe that houses along the coast are literally collapsing into the ocean. It is dangerous. Municipalities are working together to help, but we also need the help of the province, and we need it now.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change tell us what his plan is and what concrete action he is taking to help resolve this climate emergency? Thank you.

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you very much, member. We certainly take all erosion concerns and other climate change concerns very seriously. As you know, we need federal support for the majority of funds for that. It is because in the Department of Environment, everything touches the air, land, and water, and in your example, as well, the coastline is a big part of that. With the storms that we are seeing, the province is doing a great deal of work right now as well.

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There are a lot of plans in place by municipalities. I do not have the exact number right now. The majority of municipalities in the province have a flood plan. Some border inland water, some are on coastal water, and there is erosion. They do not need to work on those one at a time. There are a lot of great projects out there. I cannot be specific today on what is happening in your area, but we are working on it. It is important. We take it very seriously. We need to keep the funds coming to help each one. Will it happen overnight? No. Will it happen over time? Hopefully sooner than later because it is important. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister says he cannot be more specific; that is because he has not taken any concrete action. As my colleague mentioned earlier, the province has a Climate Change Fund that is funded by the carbon tax. However, a large part of this fund has not been spent. What I would like to find out from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is this: How much of this fund will be used to deal with the coastal erosion problem, and what will the timeline be?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, this has happened over various governments over the years. We all know that. It did not happen overnight. It did not happen in the past six months. There will be a plan.

Moving forward, there is a plan to work on each of these areas in need. The money will still be coming. The climate change money is meant to last. It is not meant to be all spent this year with nothing left for next year, because the storms keep coming as well and we need to adjust accordingly. The federal funds have been great for Pointe-du-Chêne wharf, for one example. It, too, recently opened, along the coast as well. There was heavy damage in the storms last year. This will continue. We are working with you, not against you. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Not only can the minister not be specific, but he also clearly admits that the government has no plan. Mr. Speaker, let me give you an example: Each spring, the province experiences severe flooding. The province has flood maps related to this issue. We receive I do not know how many emails and updates. There are emergency plans. However, when it comes to coastal erosion, there is nothing but radio silence from the province.

Other New Brunswickers have other needs. This is a problem that is just as urgent. So, can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain to me why there is such a disparity between two similar problems that are equally serious?

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[Original]

Hon. Mr. Carr (New Maryland-Sunbury, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to answer part of this question for the member opposite. I totally agree. We do have an issue with coastal erosion in the province. It goes around our full coast, from the Chaleur area right around to the Charlotte County area.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure does work with the Department of Justice and Public Safety on the Disaster Financial Assistance program. We identify those projects where repairs are needed, such as when Dorian and Fiona came through. We went into action and put some parameters around projects that needed to be completed. Emergency services needed to continue to go forward. So, we worked on those projects. We do have available a list of those DFA projects that will be funded going forward. We will continue to do that. Mr. Speaker, we believe that our roadways and our thruways are important for all sorts of different reasons. Thank you.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year—in April, precisely—there was an announcement in Dalhousie about clean air in long-term care facilities.

[Translation]

This announcement was seen as very good news, since, if we have learned anything during the pandemic, it is that air quality is very important, because bacteria can be spread if air quality is poor, which is harmful to nursing home residents. As we know, nursing home residents are very vulnerable.

The announcement was made. The cost was \$22 million. That was in April last year, in Dalhousie. Today, one year and three months later, I would like the minister responsible for this file to answer me this: What progress has been made on clean air in nursing homes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

Hon. Mrs. Shephard (Saint John Lancaster, Minister of Social Development, Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, PC): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the question from the member of the opposition. I do not have an update for you today. I am more than happy to take this back and to get you a proper update on the installation of air purifiers. I know that is taking place in long-term care facilities—not just in nursing homes but also in special care homes.

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I know that in our... What is the term I am looking for? It is “capital projects”. I know that certainly air quality is one of the things that we have prioritized in our capital projects and that we are trying to proceed with. Actually, we know that with a little bit of excess federal money in the long-term care sector... We cannot depend on that money in future years, so we fully believe that we are going to be able to utilize some of that money to go toward these asset projects so that we can enhance them even further and faster.

[Translation]

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, as we know, seniors in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, unlike many of us here in the House, do not have the luxury of having several decades ahead of them. I repeat: During the pandemic, we learned how harmful unclean air can be, because it promotes the spread of bacteria. If COVID-19 taught us anything, it is that an epidemic can occur and that there can be another outbreak at any time. A year and three months later, the minister is telling me that she has made no progress.

We have to do our jobs. I find it a bit deplorable that, after a year, we still do not have any news on the topic. So, I am asking the minister if it would be possible to find out when measures will be taken and when we will be able to get answers, because there are people who depend on them, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

[Original]

Hon. Mrs. Shephard (Saint John Lancaster, Minister of Social Development, Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, PC): Mr. Speaker, maybe I need to be a little clearer because I did not say that work was not being done. I said that I do not have a proper update for the member in this House today. What I am saying is that there have been some asset management changes that have improved the air quality.

You know, we have learned a tremendous amount from COVID-19. I was very blessed to have been in a couple of different seats through our COVID-19 experience. We know that air quality is really important. We know that it is really important for infection prevention. Going forward, we know that air quality is a consideration when building new nursing homes. We want to get rid of double rooms so that we can further enhance that air space and really improve the quality of life for our residents in long-term care. Work is happening, and work is continuing. Asset management is very important, and air quality is certainly one of the most important factors in that. We are doing the work.

[Translation]

Mr. K. Arseneau (Kent North, G): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the people of Richibucto. In 2016, the government announced with great fanfare that 75 jobs would be created. The Liberal government was in power at the time. The Leader of the Official

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Opposition, who worked at Opportunities New Brunswick at the time, shows up in the pictures.

Today, we find ourselves with fewer than 10 jobs—about 7 of them—and, Mr. Speaker, the people of Richibucto have to live with an unpleasant odour every day. That negatively impacts the community, its economic development, the mental health of its people, its tourism development, and its housing development. This business is located next to a school and a recreation facility. So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to revoking the permit of Coastal Shell Products in Richibucto?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member across the way. The member across the way also knows quite well that we have been involved in regular updates and regular meetings as recently as last week. We appreciate that he has taken part in those meetings. There are daily updates or nightly updates when the plant is open. There is a short-term process in place. We are taking legal counsel from the government on what we can do and what we cannot do. The plant's hours are restricted to overnight only. There is a rink next door, and there is a school nearby.

When the Liberal government brought this in, back in 2016-17—I believe it was 2016—there were 75 jobs promised. There are a lot fewer right now. It is a processing business, and it is also picking up extra shells from places that have recently burned to the ground. It is not ideal, but it is being worked on. If you look at the deadlines coming up, you will see that the crab and lobster seasons finish at the end of the month.

Mr. K. Arseneau (Kent North, G): It is more than not ideal, minister. We have kids vomiting in school because of the stench. We have residents who have to go to their families' homes a few miles away so that they can sleep at night. They cannot sleep because of the stench. At the meeting last week, the minister did not say one word. He let the civil servants talk, and not one politician took any position. We, as legislators, can change that law right now if it is not strong enough and help these people in Richibucto.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the business was supposed to present its plan before May 31. It is past May 31, and what did the government do? It gave the business another month of respite by saying: Take your time, we do not mind. Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to coming to camp near the plant for two weeks?

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[Original]

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have learned over the years that the loudest person is not always speaking for everyone. I have been to Richibucto myself. Maybe it was during the off hours when there was not a stench. There was not a smell. I was happy to be there.

I understand the area, and it is not easy. The extension is for the business to get its plans together over the 30 days. As I finished my last reply, I said that the processing season finishes June 30. This will give the company time to get together its funding, its scrubbers, or whatever filtering is necessary.

The department continues to conduct frequent site visits, as the member opposite would know. People are on the spot during operating hours, in the after hours, and in between. I know that our deputy minister was there a week or so ago as well. They do their odour surveys throughout the community. We receive the regular updates and emails. It is a concern. We take it seriously. It just cannot be as easy as fixing it overnight. It does take time, and we want to do it right.

[Translation]

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

I want to do a little summary of what I heard today because it is Canadian Environment Week. We heard that there is no current plan for clean electricity or clean energy. There is a secretariat. There is a hydrogen committee. I just heard that there is a nuclear committee. Then I heard from the Premier that there is a path that is going to be released midsummer. I would really love to know what that path is, if it is not the plan for 2023 or maybe 2025. We heard that air quality is very important. Thank you for that, to the Minister of Social Development. We heard that hydrogen development is going to take 10 or 15 years but we are out there selling it.

Then we heard that the Premier wants, from the federal government, more time on Clean Fuel Regulations. That was a request back in 2020. The federal government was asked for more time. Three years was granted. Can we please show climate leadership and not pass those costs on to consumers?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, with all due respect to the Leader of the Opposition, that was an absolutely inaccurate summary of what she heard. I do not know what was

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going through the microphone, but we have been leading the charge for the past five years as it relates to driving forward with an SMR plan that is putting us at the front of the globe.

We have been moving forward with protecting lands at a historic level that has never been seen before, which is going to provide freshwater protection and which will go toward mitigating a lot of the climate issues that we are talking about. By the way, a by-product of more growing and vibrant forests is oxygen.

You can talk about clean air in a nursing home. We are talking about creating it for the entire environment. We are also talking about energy strategies that could potentially have our province leading the way to decarbonize other locations by being a leader as it relates to exporting a variety of different products that the world needs. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should realize that this is a government that is reading and hearing about the needs the globe has and that will be a leader when it comes to lowering those...

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you, minister. Time. The time for question period has ended.