

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



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BRIDGES

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's enthusiastic speech from the Minister of Finance had me motivated to maybe do a deeper dive into his capital budget. There is a lot of selection, but I decided to fall onto DTI and, more specifically, the Bridge Condition Index (BCI). I went back and read most of the annual reports since this government has been in place, and there was always a statement that said: The network of bridges continues to age, and inspection results for some bridges move them into the poor category. This is due to the lack of funding.

Due to the lack of funding—that was written in 2019 and 2020. In 2021, in this last report, the part that said “lack of funding” disappeared in the comment despite the fact that there was no extra money and the ratings were still getting worse. There are more bridges going into the poor category. Can the minister kind of clarify why we lost that past statement in this last report?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for asking a question about the capital budget. There is a record-setting amount in this capital budget. Last year, we set the record at \$1 billion, and this year, we took it up by 20% to \$1.2 billion.

Transportation is something that the member talked about. There are \$585.2 million—over half a billion dollars—going into DTI, including \$505 million for the maintenance and improvement of highways, roads, and bridges around the province, \$50 million for the maintenance and improvement of buildings and other infrastructure, and another \$30 million for vehicle management.

It continues. The great news from this government continues. The great news from this government continues. The \$1.2 billion will address cost pressures on existing programs and projects. This takes market conditions into account. It takes investments in priority areas into account. That is what this government has done all this time. We have invested strategically. We have said it from day one—

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

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, what a great segue that the Minister of Finance would answer that question. He is really focusing on this year. When I look at the first three reports that the government had on the Bridge Condition Index, I can see that it did not spend the money it had budgeted every single year. Now, the government keeps increasing it, but it is only catching up with the mess that it essentially created in the first three years. If you are only going to spend this year saying, look how much we have increased . . . How about you look at the whole mandate?

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This is what I want to know from the Minister of DTI. Now that the department has a bit of extra money, does he feel that the BCI is actually going to increase this year? It is his department, so he should know whether that BCI, with this year's planning, should get better. Can the minister answer that question?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. As I said in the last answer, this budget addresses cost pressures. The member is talking about delays to projects due to cost pressures, due to lack of labour, or due to lack of supplies and building materials. This budget does address cost pressures due to those market conditions on existing programs and projects.

We continue to build. We continue to make . . . This year, six schools are going to be . . . Well, there will be four new schools and two major renovations—major renovations—to schools in order to handle all the newcomers who are here in New Brunswick.

Whether or not it is because of us . . . Do you know what? We are here, and they are coming here. Wow, this government is taking care of business. This government is taking care not only of schools but also of social development.

The housing budget in Social Development is \$55 million, with \$38 million for construction and maintenance of affordable housing units in the province and another \$17 million for—

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

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, let's recall those great employees at DTI that the minister keeps bringing up. This minister just said that it is because of lack of supplies and lack of labour. In black and white, those great employees, in two reports, said that it was because of lack of funding, not lack of supplies or labour—funding. I do not see that happening.

SIGNAGE

I am going to ask a different question to the minister. I was talking to a mayor and one of his general managers. Has anything been put in the budget for changing the signs on the highways because of the change in local governance? Apparently, the department said that there is no money put into the budget this year, Year 2 of the local governance change. So, is there any money this year?

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you very much for the question. It is quite simple. The committee will be held, and all the details will be unveiled. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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HOMELESS SHELTERS

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to circle back now. December 1 is fast approaching, and the homeless shelters or hubs are set to open. One has been opened in Moncton, but they will go full-time on December 1. On October 31, the minister responsible said that they are reviewing what support services are going to be needed in those shelters. She called them service hubs and not shelters, and she said that all departments are going to be providing services and that they are working through those details. On November 21, she talked about inreach and outreach teams. She talked about Social Development, Justice, Public Safety, Health, mental health and addiction training, social work assistance to people, and all these services going into those hubs.

I want to narrow down on mental health and addictions. What I am seeing is that those individuals are in desperate need of services and help to get ahead, so I want to know specifically what mental health and addiction services the department is ready to provide in those service hubs.

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the summary of all the different discussions we have had around homelessness and the work that we are doing with the communities to help solve the homelessness issue we have here in New Brunswick. Before I get specifically into answering that question, I want to note that we have 301 permanent beds around the province for people experiencing homelessness. We have also ramped up our out-of-the-cold beds to an additional 200 beds around the province for the cold winter months.

The hubs are a new addition to the services we provide to address the homelessness issue and for the communities, and different services are provided in each hub. We have had a meeting and sat down with community stakeholders in each of the major cities where these hubs are going to be located: Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John. The Saint John one happened just last week, and I was down there for that on Thursday. All the services that would be in a hub are individual to each community. I hope you ask more—

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past couple of weeks, the leader and I have had the opportunity to go around and meet with the different agencies that are providing these emergency services in the cities, especially in Moncton, for me. What I am hearing is that there is a glaring need for the Department of Health, specifically Addiction and Mental Health Services, to step up and come to the table to provide meaningful services. A lot of times, agencies such as Partners for Youth, which is here today, and different agencies in Moncton are left holding the bag, having to fill the gaps. They are left, year after year, begging the government for funding to help fill the gaps

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in the services that the Department of Health and Addiction and Mental Health Services are supposed to provide. So I would like to know this when we are talking about these service hubs. All the different departments are at the table, and services are going to be provided. In terms of mental health and addictions, what specifically is going to be provided for these individuals who are in desperate need of help?

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, each individual community and its stakeholders got together to begin to understand the needs of the community and what the stakeholders feel belong within these hubs. The team is now putting together exactly who and what will be in each hub, and when. Two of the hubs are up and running part-time now. They will be operating 24-7 starting December 1. Those are the Moncton and Fredericton hubs. The team from Health and Addiction and Mental Health Services has been fully engaged in this process.

Those people were there at each of these community meetings where we were discussing what the needs of the community are. The team will be on site to help and work with the community members who visit the hubs. Now, the hours and the timing for when those individuals from Health will be in the facility are different for each community. I can bring all that information back to the House when we are ready to be at 100%, 24-7. But each community will have individuals from Health within those hubs. Thank you.

COURTS

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another key piece to this issue, as I have talked about before, is expanding the Mental Health Court to other areas. It is currently only in Saint John.

We debated this motion on Thursday. The government acknowledged that there is a need to expand innovative approaches such as the Mental Health Court in Saint John to other regions in the province. It watered down the motion with an amendment that ultimately urges the government to continue to expand access to mental health and addiction treatment spaces across the province and to continue to expand the capacity of the provincial courts to more effectively address the unique needs of these offenders.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know whether the government is prepared to realize this commitment to expand those services to people who are involved in the court system, such as these individuals who are often on the streets. They are arrested and released, arrested and released, and no services are provided to them. I know that there is a little bit of an escape clause that the government inserted into that motion, but I want to know what it is prepared to do to realize the Assembly's will—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, member.

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Hon. Mr. Flemming, K.C. (Rothesay, Minister of Justice, Attorney General, PC): You know, Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a little rich. The opposition comes in with a motion on mental health courts. I took that motion in good faith. I worked with the practicalities of labour relations and staffing. I met with the member opposite on a sincere basis to try to move this file forward, bearing in mind that we have limited resources to do so because of the labour shortage in many aspects of this. I was approached by the member opposite, who said that he could support this amendment. He agreed to support it. He stood up, voted in favour of it, and came over and shook my hand. Now he is calling it a watered-down motion and things like that. That is what is wrong with this House and that is what is wrong with those people over there.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. C. Chiasson (Victoria-La Vallée, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There seems to be an air of secrecy emanating from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. Over the past few weeks, all the emails that I sent to one government official have gone completely ignored. When I pressed another official, I was told that my emails were sent to the minister's office. They have not been answered.

My question to the minister is a simple one. Why is there a gag order within the department forbidding employees from communicating with opposition MLAs?

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is no gag order on anything. If the member opposite has any questions, he can certainly feel free to reach out to me at any given time. I am available anytime. It is an open-door policy. There is absolutely no gag order. That is absolutely ridiculous. Thank you.

Mr. C. Chiasson (Victoria-La Vallée, L): I am not talking about asking him questions, Mr. Speaker. I am talking about emails that I have sent to officials whom I had always gotten answers from anytime I had sent them emails before. I am not getting those answers now. I am being told: Your email has been forwarded to the minister's office.

We have bridge projects that are overdue. We have a justice building that the government does not want to talk about. We have air quality issues in schools that need to be addressed. We have maintenance deficits piling up on roads, bridges, and buildings to pad this government's surplus. There are questions that need to be answered.

So, my next question is even simpler: What is it that you have to hide?

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. There is absolutely nothing to hide. How ridiculous is that?

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I would suggest to the member opposite that we schedule a meeting that is convenient, just as I am meeting with some of the members opposite from his party this afternoon. I have met with the Green Party as well. I am available at any given time. He can bring his questions, and let's have a meeting. Thank you.

Mr. C. Chiasson (Victoria-La Vallée, L): The meeting that I would like to have, Mr. Speaker, is one where I sit down with the minister and his staff and he assures me, in front of his staff, that when I email them that I will receive a response to my email.

That is what I want. If he wants to have a meeting with me, then that is the meeting I want to have. Will the minister sit down with me and his staff and assure me, in front of his staff, that when I email an official within the department, I will receive an answer?

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite struggles with the process. I understand that. I do not know what else to say other than to tell him to pick up the phone and give me a call. Let's have a meeting.

[Translation]

SMALL MODULAR REACTORS

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the third day in a row, the Minister responsible for Opportunities NB is being asked for answers regarding small modular reactors. Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm to us whether the \$20 million promised by the province has all in fact been disbursed? Were the criteria met? Were the calls for private sector investment completely delivered on? These are three small questions; the same questions have been asked for three days now, so I hope that this time, Mr. Speaker, they will be answered.

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Turner (Moncton South, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB; Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we have heard the same question over and over and over, and the answer is the same over and over and over. It has nothing to do with our department whatsoever. I will take it under advisement, and when the minister is back in the country, we will get an answer for the member.

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[Translation]

OPPORTUNITIES NEW BRUNSWICK

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is ironic, because the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, who normally sits in front of the minister who just spoke, as he mentioned, clearly told us during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Economic Policy that this question was not for him to answer, but rather for the Minister responsible for Opportunities NB. This is like playing with a yo-yo, because government members don't know who is responsible for which file.

Well, let's get back to the question about the \$20 million. Mr. Speaker, in the main estimates for Opportunities New Brunswick, there is funding of about \$50 million. There is \$20 million for small nuclear reactors, and there is a \$30-million loan that was given to the Fairmont Algonquin hotel by the government. So, \$20 million plus \$30 million is \$50 million. That is the total amount in the budget. Can the minister confirm that, right now, all of that money has been allocated? What is left to fund other projects in New Brunswick?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, thanks for the question. I want to talk a bit about the SMR file because I was there early on and I was there when the previous Liberal government invested money in Moltex and ARC. We followed suit with that because we believe we need to be in the game, as did the Liberals. We need to be in the nuclear game because that is the only real noncarbon-emitting potential to supply the energy needs for the future. We have invested and continue to invest the same way.

Yes, there are criteria that are developed on each test. They are moving along on the series. Mr. Speaker, we can bring this in, where we stand today with both technologies. But there is an ongoing view of how we can get the right technology for Canada, because at the end of the day, it needs to be a pan-Canadian approach, where we are working with Ontario and with ourselves in what we are looking at for technology. At the end of the day, the federal government, as it did years ago with CANDU, will say: Okay, this is our Canadian nuclear answer. That is our strategy, and we can give a report on where they stand.

[Translation]

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, imagine that, despite the comments from the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, the Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, and the Premier, the very simple questions that have been being asked for the past three days have still not been answered. That is quite clearly the situation with this government.

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Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the Premier rose, because I spoke about the \$30-million loan given to the Fairmont Algonquin hotel this year. People will remember the \$21-million loan that the Premier gave to the Fairmont Algonquin hotel in 2012, when he was Minister of Finance. So, in 2012, a \$21-million loan was given by the Minister of Finance, who is now Premier. Today, the Premier is giving another \$30-million loan to the Fairmont Algonquin hotel.

The question will be simple, Mr. Speaker. Was the \$30-million loan used to repay the \$21-million loan? If not, what do these numbers mean, exactly, for New Brunswick? Was the money fully repaid? What will ensure that, in the future, this money is invested properly?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member opposite, the Algonquin file is continuing.

The change of ownership happened in the past year or so. There is the same amount of money, and the indebtedness to the province is ongoing, just with new owners. The new owners are from the largest company in Canada in the hospitality business. The Algonquin is in new hands. We are seeing new development opportunities coming to that area, to the golf course, and to the infrastructure around the Algonquin. We are really, really pleased with the opportunities that this new corporation is going to be bringing to that area of the province. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

BRIDGES

Mr. Mallet (Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, L): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, do you remember that on September 12, 2020, you came to my riding to announce to the people there that a new bridge would not be built in Shippagan? Following the tabling of the capital budget by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board yesterday, do you still firmly intend to respond to my constituents by telling them that a new bridge will not be built to connect Lamèque and Shippagan?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is indeed a famous bridge—an historic bridge, really. They do not make lift bridges like this anymore, so when you travel there it is a pretty impressive site. It is working really well. My understanding is that it has about 98% or more reliability. That means that it is doing well in service. We spent about \$10 million on it.

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The answer to the member and to the riding . . . This is not the first time that this issue has been discussed. I could talk about our former colleague in that regard. Mr. Speaker, this was based on the technical review of the bridge, on the conditions that it needs, and on when it needs to be replaced. A bridge is a bridge as long as it continues to be a bridge and people use it. This one is working just fine. The technical review will confirm when it needs to be replaced.

My assurance to the riding of the member opposite is that it will be replaced when it needs to be replaced, but it will not be based on a political decision. It will be based on reality and on the condition and ability of the bridge to no longer form and be part of a strategic link between Lamèque Island and Miscou Island, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, the announcement by the Minister of Social Development of a \$200 income supplement starting in February is causing social assistance recipients to feel very insecure. More specifically, they are wondering whether this supplement will disappear in the next budget, on April 1, because the additional income being described as a supplement makes it seem temporary. Will the \$200 income supplement for social assistance recipients be converted into a \$200 increase in social assistance rates on April 1, under the next budget?

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that having the terminology around that supplement may be a bit concerning to some New Brunswickers who rely on that for their sustenance. This is a permanent \$200 supplement. We put this in and created the supplement because of the timing and so that we could get this released to New Brunswickers as fast as we possibly could. When it is appropriate to make that part of the entire package for social assistance, we will do that.

Going forward, we will continue with the household supplement because that allows us to get this into the hands of New Brunswickers in a couple of months, which will be starting in February. I am pleased that this will be part of the permanent package for our social assistance clients going forward. We will incorporate this into the full package in the future when the time is appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to the minister for her clarification. If we had a guaranteed livable income in New Brunswick, we could virtually eliminate deep poverty in this province. A guaranteed livable income would see poverty rates decline, both physical and mental health improve, and the reduction of health costs.

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Crime rates would go down, family violence would drop, and high school completion rates would soar.

The city councils of Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton, Bathurst, and Edmundston have all passed resolutions in support of a guaranteed livable income and have called upon the provincial and federal governments to work together toward implementing one. My question is for the Minister of Social Development. Has the minister approached the federal government to begin work on a guaranteed livable income for New Brunswick?

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has undertaken a significant amount of work around our social assistance programs and other programs that we have in place for vulnerable New Brunswickers. We have indexed social assistance to the cost of living so that there is an adjustment each April. We have increased the rates. We had added a \$200 supplement because we are in a time of need and high inflation right now in New Brunswick. We continue to look at all our programs around affordability for New Brunswickers, at our programs around social assistance, at the needs of our clients on social assistance, and at our programs associated with—as I would particularly like to say on this day—our children and youth in care. Mr. Speaker, this is something that our team is continuously looking at because we care.

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

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, a detailed report on a guaranteed livable income for Prince Edward Island was released last week. It found that 65% fewer children would be living in poverty, that 90% of people living alone could escape poverty, and that poverty among people with disabilities would be virtually eliminated. A guaranteed livable income for New Brunswick would be a gamechanger. It would not only help support people living in poverty but would also eradicate deep poverty.

This year's Food Banks Canada poverty report gave New Brunswick an overall grade of D- and a grade of F for material deprivation because 17% of New Brunswickers have severely inadequate standards of living. Mr. Speaker, the cities of Bathurst, Edmundston, Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John have all passed resolutions calling on the Minister of Social Development to begin the work to put in place a guaranteed livable income for New Brunswickers. When is she going to do so?

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to challenge the member opposite back. When are we going to do something? We have been doing something since we have been in power. We have made change after change after change as we, as a team, and the team at Social Development look at affordability for New

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Brunswickers and what the needs are for New Brunswickers. We have made change after change after change, and we will continue to make changes as we have a better understanding of the needs of New Brunswickers and the needs of our clients.

I would also like to add that there was some confusion around the \$200 supplement. There was some concern that individuals on disability would not be receiving that \$200 supplement. I would like to correct that, Mr. Speaker. All individuals, including individuals with disability benefits, will be receiving the \$200 supplement per month.

PULP AND PAPER MILLS

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of doing something since government has been in power . . . To the Minister of Finance, we are almost in December again, and the Smurfit-Stone mill site is still out there as an orphan site. The Auditor General has already said that, essentially, the responsibility for this site is going to fall on the province, so we have the responsibility. I know that the minister is going to say that he is negotiating with the city, and that is great. What I would like to know is why the minister would not take the property now. Take it over, make it easier in negotiations, start remediation, and start getting some work done. We have been talking about this for three years. Why not do it this year? It is time.

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): To the member opposite, thank you very much for the question. The member would know many people who are on the city council there, and he would absolutely have a better insight into what is going on at that level than I would. Our government is continuing to work with the city of Bathurst on this file. I would expect to learn more information on the proposed development plan from the city in the near future. What we are doing right now is waiting for information from the city.

Work to complete an environmental site assessment and a remedial action plan was completed in the spring, so we are on our way. This is one step at a time, as the member knows. At this time, we are waiting for the city to come forward with a plan.

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as a reminder, it is not the city's problem.

I have a question for the Minister of Public Safety. Essentially, the former owner of the mill site took all the fencing away to sell it for the metal. This site has sinkholes, dangerous areas, and contaminated areas.

Now, we have a lot of reports of homeless people and drug users using the old admin building at the mill, and people are lighting fires. We have regular calls where police are going in and chasing these people. Is the minister going to find a way or does he have money in his budget to secure this site this year?

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Hon. Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Minister of Public Safety, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I can tell you that, when we talk about what I think the member is referring to—trespassing—coincidentally, we have a bill on the floor in relation to trespassing that we have put through committee. It will strengthen that law so that enforcement officers can do their job when it comes to people who trespass on private property.

In relation to the mill specifically, I will tell you that we will take that under advisement and work with local authorities and the RCMP to ensure that those issues are addressed. But, again, this goes back to enforcement and legislation that enables enforcement officers to do their job.

While I have the member's attention, I would also like to mention that, in relation to the drug issue, because our department has gone from 6 safer communities officers to 41 in the past year alone, we have disrupted and vacated 110 drug houses across this province. We are working to solve this problem here at home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): The time for question period has expired. I believe that the Minister responsible for Seniors has a response to a question.

NURSING HOMES

Hon. Ms. Bockus (Saint Croix, Minister responsible for Seniors, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have some information that I was asked for yesterday. I would like to deliver that now, if I could.

We have 931 people on the nursing home wait list, as of yesterday. Some 436 of those are in a hospital waiting for a nursing home placement. Further to the question on why I had not met with a certain individual, I did meet with AFANB's Norma Dubé and Marc Angers on September 21. The gentleman that the member opposite spoke of was on that invitation list, and he did not attend that meeting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Do you have a follow-up question?

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): First, I spoke to the gentleman, whose name is Marcel, yesterday. That is not what he said. That is all that I am going to say. She said it. He said it.

Now, on the people, there are 931 waiting. All right. We talked about this yesterday. There is a lack of staff. We have people who are waiting, in good faith, on negotiations with this government to make sure that staff can work there with good conditions so that they will not have to change jobs and so that they do not have to get a second job.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Member, would you address your comments through the chair, and if you have a question, ask the question?

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Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Yes, sir. I apologize.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): I am too young. All right, sir.

There are people leaving those professions because they do not have good wages. As I said, I spoke to a woman from Saint John who has been working for 35 years and gets \$9 more per hour. When are you going to something to help these people? Thank you very much.

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If there is an individual who has an issue, please send them directly to me and I will speak to them and try to resolve the issue. As the member opposite knows, we are in active negotiations with the nursing homes right now. I will not be commenting on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.